

SERMONS

14958
PREACH'D

Upon Several Occasions

Before

KING WILLIAM,

AND

QUEEN ANNE.

By Sir *WILLIAM DAWES*, Baronet,
D. D. and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her
Majesty, Now Lord-Bishop of *Chester*.

Publish'd by Her Majesties Special Command.

L O N D O N:

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1709.



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TO THE
QUEEN.

May it please Your Sacred Majesty.

WITH Your usual Goodness and
Condescension, to accept the fol-
lowing Discourses: which, having been,
most of them preach'd in *Your Majesty's*
or Your Predecessor's, Royal presence,
take some encouragement from thence,
to lay themselves at *Your Majesty's* feet:
But much more from the consideration
of their aiming at that great end, which
Your Majesty has so wisely made the su-
preme end of all Your Actions, the promo-
ting of God's Glory, and the Happiness
of Mankind.

It is an inexpressible advantage to our
poor endeavours, for this great end, that
they are sure of being Countenanc'd by
Your Majesty's Gracious Approbation of
them, assisted by Your Royal Authority,
and,

The DEDICATION.

and, which is yet more, inforc'd by Your
Illustrious Example. We cannot be alto-
gether without hope, that being thus
powerfully recommended and supported,
they may, in time, prove successful, and
gain strength enough; by degrees, to pre-
vail over the Libertinism and Corruptness
of a prophane and Degenerate Age, and
to restore true Religion, to its Primitive
Lustre, and Authority.

May God long preserve Your Majesty
as a burning and shining Light in the midst
of a faithless and perverse Generation, to
bring to pass this Glorious end. May his
Blessing be upon all Your Pious Endeavours,
for this purpose; May he always
go on, to reward you for them, in some
measure, even in this World, as he has
hitherto done, with uncommon Successes
and Victories over all your Enemies
abroad, and with the Dutiful, affectionate
and Loyal Services, of all Your Subjects at
home. And, when at last he shall think
fit to call You to himself (oh ! that, it

merc

The DEDICATION.

our mercy to a sinful People, this may long,
alto. long, be deferr'd) May he compleat your
thus Reward, by making you to *shine forth in*
rted, his *Kingdom*, amongst those, who have
and been *wise*, and *turn'd many to Righteousness*,
pre- as the *brightness of the firmament*, and as
pness the *stars*, for ever and ever. This is the
and constant, hearty, and most earnest Prayer,
itive of,

May it please Your Majesty,

Your Majesty's

Most Humble and most Obedient

Subject and Servant,

W. DAWES.

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*The Pains and Terrors of a Wounded Conscience
Insupportable.*

A
SERMON

PREACH'D before the

QUEEN,

AT

Saint JAMES's Chappel,

On the 3d of March, 170^t.

PROV. xviii. 14. *the latter part of the Verse.*

A wounded Spirit who can bear?

By Sir **WILLIAM DAWES** Baronet, D. D.
and Chaplain in Ordinary to Her Majesty,

Published by Her Majesties Special Command.

L O N D O N :

Printed and Sold by *H. Hills*, in *Black-fryars*, near
Water-side, For the Benefit of the Poor. 1708.



Proverbs XVIII. 14. the latter part of the Verse.

A Wounded Spirit who can bear.

IN discoursing upon these Words, I shall endeavour to shew
First, What we are to understand here by a *Wounded Spirit*.

Secondly, That such a *wounded Spirit* is indeed intollerable.

And then *lastly*, I shall conclude with some practical Reflections upon the whole.

First then, by a *wounded Spirit*, or as the words should be render'd, a *troubled and afflicted Spirit or Mind*, it is plain we are not to understand a Mind heavy laden and oppress'd with the common ill Accidents and Calamities of this Life: such as come upon us, wholly without any fault of ours, either immediately and directly from the Divine Providence it self, or at least, by the permission of that, from some other inferior Agent. And this, not only because the *wounded Spirit* in my Text is oppos'd to all such Evils (which are there call'd *Man's Infirmary*, that is, such as are natural and common to Man, *who is born to trouble as the Sparks fly upwards*) Job 5. 7. but also, because all Afflictions and Troubles of this kind, how sharp and grievous soever, are yet as is there declared, really tollerable. The Spirit or Mind of Man, or as others would have it Translated, a *Mortally Mind*; a brave and generous Soul, fortifying and encouraging it self with some comfortable and heart'ning Considerations of Reason and Religion (as that all such Afflictions come from God, the just and wise and good Creatour disposer and governour of all things; that they are sent by him, out of infinite love and kindness to us, to awaken us out of our Sins, and to fright us from them, to reduce us to our Duties, to try and quicken our Graces and Virtues

and by so doing to prepare and qualify us for his Favour; that they are always either proportion'd by him to our strength, or which is much at one, that our strength, is assisted by his grace and thereby made sufficient for them; 2 Cor. 12. 9. that they cannot last long, to be sure, at the utmost, not longer then our Lives: and that after Death if we bear them patiently and contentedly, and endeavour to reap those good Fruits from them, which the Divine Providence design'd by them, we shall be rewarded for them with an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory*) will find it an easie matter to sustain it self under all these Infirmities. 2 Cor. 4. 17. And therefore

Secondly, By a *wounded Spirit* here, we are certainly to understand a Mind labouring under the Burden and pressure of much worse Evils, than any of these. And what can that be? but, either,

First, A Mind distracted and torn in pieces, by the violence of those boystrous, turbulent and vexatious Lusts and Passions, which we are too apt to beget, cherish, and blow up into a flame within our own Breasts: such as Ambition, Pride, Avarice, Revenge, Malice, Envy, Anger, Unclean-ness, and the rest of that Hellish Crew: which, whenever they singly, much more joyntly, take possession of a Man, destroy all his true Peace and Tranquility of Mind; and by continually hurrying him on to new Projects, for their Gratification: plunging him in new Difficulties, by their rashness: vexing and fretting him with their Disappointments: pulling him different, nay, perhaps contrary, ways to serve their various Humours? and still the more they are serv'd and obey'd, clamouring yet louder for Service and Obedience: harrafs and torment his Soul, beyond all expression. Or

Secondly, A Mind sadly conscious to it self of an abominably ill-spent Life: of its having been in a continued course of Rebellion against the Laws of its own Reason, and the yet infinitely more perfect ones of an All-wise, and All-good God: and of having thereby brought it self, not only under its own dislike and hatred, but also under the most severe Displeasure and dreadful Curse of God: with- in the verge of Hell, and almost within the feeling of those

inconceivable Torments, which are there prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels. Mar. 25. 41.

And this is that *wounded Spirit*, which I intend now solely to insist upon. And that I may not seem to some Men to talk only of a Chimæra of my own making, I shall beg leave to observe how frequently the very *Heathen* themselves (whose Authority, it is to be hop'd, will pass with our Admirers of Reason and Natural Religion, free and unquestion'd) speak of such a *wounded Spirit* as this, in their Writings; telling us over and over, Tull. Orat. pro Milon. *That so great is the Power of Conscience, that those who have committed any Fault, live in perpetual fear of Punishment*; Plutarch. p. 556. Edit. parif. *That many sorrows and grievous perturbations of Mind, Repentance and continual Tumults and Disorders, Diffidence concerning even their present state, and black and melancholy suspicions of their future one are the natural consequences of Mens evil Actions*. Senec. Ep. 97. 98. 105. *That, in proportion to Mens sins, their fears will grow upon them, and never let them be quiet; that for these they will be scourged, and mightily tormented*. Juvenal. Sat. 13. And lastly, *That they Night and Day carry about in their own Breasts a Witness against themselves, which doth secretly terrify, lash and torture them and fill them with dreadful apprehensions of Punishments to come*. Nay even *Lucretius* himself doth, lib. 1. lib. 3 more than once, acknowledge this to be the common cause of Mankind, even while he blameth them for it, and supposeth their Fears upon this account, to be altogether Childish and Unreasonable, without the least ground or Foundation in Nature, and the pure effects of Fancy or Education.

But surely, with his good leave, it is much more likely that such universal Fears, as he himself confesseth these to be, should proceed from some fix'd and uniform principle of Nature or Reason, common to all Mankind, than from the unsettled and perpetually varying ones of Fancy and Education; and consequently it must be allowed to be highly probable, at least, that these Fears have some real Object exist-

ing in Nature to answer them, as all other such universal affections of our minds are generally deem'd to have. And indeed, without supposing that they have so, I cannot possibly see what one wise or good end can be promoted by these Fears: And if so, Humane Nature must needs appear to be very odd and unaccountable thing, having these Fears, as certain Seeds of Misery, sown in it, without any other Reason, or for any other end or purpose, than purely to make it miserable. Which, how consistent soever it may be with the Notion of a World hudled together by chance (as indeed any thing how odd soever, may consist with that) yet it can never be reconciled to the Notion of an All-wise and All-good God, who created Mankind, and implanted these Fears in them.

Besides, let wicked Men pretend what they will, since on the one hand, it is absolutely impossible for them to demonstrate, that there will be no such thing as a state of future Punishment for the Wicked: And since on the other hand, it cannot be denied but that there are a great many, at least probable Arguments that there will be such a state; there must ever be just and reasonable grounds for these Fears and Misgivings of Conscience: there must ever be (all things considered) not from Fancy or Education, but from Natural and Rational Conviction, Distrusts, Jealousies and Forebodings upon our Minds, of a dreadful state of Punishment, to follow and do justice upon an habitual state of Sin.

And thus much I thought necessary to premise, in order to engage the attention even of natural Men, if any such there be here, to the following part of my Discourse; by shewing them briefly (tho' I doubt not but that they have full, very full, evidence of this within their own Breasts; if they would be so honest and ingenious as to speak the Truth) even from the acknowledgments of the best and wisest of their own Heathen Friends, and from the very dictates of that Nature and Reason, which they pretend so strictly to follow and obey, that there is, there must be, such a Wounded Spirit, as we are now discoursing of. And having done this, I shall the more chearfully proceed.

Secondly, To prove that such a *wounded Spirit* is indeed intolerable. And this, I hope I shall be able to make very plain, both from *Reason* and *Experience*.

First, From *Reason*, which seems readily to admit these two things.

First, That a *wounded Spirit* is the greatest Evil, or Affliction, that can possibly befall us, in this Life.

Secondly, That there is no assistance any where to be had, to enable us to support our selves under it: but, on the contrary, all those things, which us'd to administer Comfort to us, under our other Afflictions, turn powerfully against us, and mightily help to encrease this.

First, That a *wounded Spirit* is the greatest, Evil or Affliction, that can possibly befall us, in this Life, There are no Afflictions so sharp and pungent, as those, which do most immediately affect, our most sensible part, the *Mind*: and nothing sure can affect that, like the lashes of our own Reason and Conscience, like the dread of and offended God, and the imminent danger of falling into Infinite and Everlasting Torments. It is no small uneasiness to a Man, to be unable to approve and justify himself to his own mind, and to lie under a sentence of Condemnation from his own Reason; but it is an uneasiness, above all uneasinesses, to lie under so much as the apprehension, much more the certain expectation of God's wrath: nay, and of that fiercest and hottest wrath too, which he has laid up in store, for the Ungodly against the great and terrible *day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*. Rom. 2. 5. This wrath doth so infinitely transcend and surpass all other the Dispensations of God's wrath against Sinners in this world: that the very Fears of this must needs be a great deal more terrible and grievous, than the actual feeling of those. Besides there is this aggravating Circumstance peculiar to a *wounded Spirit*, that, while all other afflictions grow easier and lighter by continuance, and by degrees wear off and decline towards an end, this alone is always encreasing; because always coming nearer and nearer to that, which, tho' an end to all other Afflictions, is the beginning of such an additional load

to this, as it makes me even tremble to think of. To all which add, that this is such an Affliction as brings all other Afflictions along with it: for *a broken Spirit*, as *Solomon observes, drieth the bones*, Prov. 17. 22. that is, destroyeth our Health, spoils our Taste of every thing that is good and pleasant, and, like a secret fire within us, is continually preying upon us and devouring us.

Father yet, it is not to be doubted but that, besides the nature of the thing it self, God doth, in Judgement, widen and enlarge this wound upon the *Spirits* of Sinners, and, as the Prophet *Jeremiab* expresth it, *add grief to their sorrow*; Jer. 45. 3. by withdrawing the comfortable presence of his *Holy Spirit* from them, quick'ning their sense of their Guilt, representing to them, in an extraordinary manner, the danger of their Condition, giving them a plainer sight and apprehension of the Torments of Hell, and thereby bringing them, as it were, nearer to them. All this, as it is very agreeable to Reason to suppose of God, after he has been, beyond all measure, affronted and exasperated by Sinners; so is it exactly consistent with his way of dealing with obstinate Sinners, in all other cases, which is to add to those Mischiefs which they have willfully brought upon themselves; *stopping the ears*, and *hardned the hearts* of those, who would not hear when he called, nor relent when he punish'd: *Isai*, 6. 10. *Rom.* 1. 18. *giving these up to a reprobate mind, who did not like to retain him in their knowledge*; and *sending strong delusions on them, who received not the love of the truth, that they should believe a lie.* 2. *Theff.* 2. 11. And moreover, it is expressly said of *Saul*, when he was under grief and trouble of Mind, upon account of his having disobey'd and provok'd God, *that the spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled*, or as it is in the Margent, *terrified him.* 1. *Sam.* 16. 14.

Well then might the Son of *Sirach* pray *Give me any plague, but the plague of thy heart*, *Ecclus.* 25 13. and well may we cry out, with *St. Ambrose*, *What pain is more grievous than that of a wounded Conscience, is not this rather to be avoided, than Weakness, than Poverty, than Banishment, nay*

than Death it self? lib. 3. Offic. cap. 4 And, with S. use. F
Austin, Among all the troubles and Afflictions of the Mind of merous,
Man, there is none greater than that of a guilty Conscience. rievous
 In. Ps. 45. And yet as great, as unspeakably great, as suffering
 this Affliction is, there is still one terrible and enflaming and Con
 Circumstance of it behind, and that is hem, th

Secondly, That there is no assistance any where to be had, and the
 to enable us to support our selves under it; but on the con- Nor i
 trary, all those things, which us'd to administer Comfort to us, hers ob
 under our other Afflictions, turn powerfully against us, and the m
 mightily help to encrease this. How great soever our Aff- ne great
 flictions or Sufferings are in themselves, yer so long as we ne great
 are any way assisted with Succours and Supports, in proporti- igher a
 on to their greatness be it what it will, they are still tolerable, all we
 But when an exceeding, and more than ordinarily, heavy But a
 burthen is laid upon us, and we have not only no new additio- re our f
 nal strength and assistance communicated to us, but have even s under
 our own ordinary strength and abilities very much impair'd, ain Cr
 nay perhaps quite taken away, it must needs be impossible save u
 for us to stand under it. And this alas! is the misery of our green u
 present case. Our burthen, as you have seen, is beyond all vengean
 conception great; and yet, wherever we turn our eyes, whi- eal our
 ther within to our selves or without to others, we shall not be ents an
 able to find any thing, to give us the least help or support ose wi
 under it. Topic of

If we look into our selves, and consult first, as is most to the c
 natural, our own *Reason*, for aid: that cannot but own the hey not
 Justice of the Divine Vengeance, lay the Torments we feel eason,
 at our own doors, and read our Sentence of Condemnation ob. 16
 again to us, with an *higher voice*, So far will that be from Could
 giving us any Comfort, that it will continually upbraid, re- an, ou
 proach and give us *new lashes* for our Folly; so far from miti- apply u
 gating and asswaging our sorrows, that it will continually God's sig
increase both the Pains which we already feel, and our Fears ot supp
 and Expectations of more and greater. he caus

Well then, let us try to rally our *natural Courage* and see las! we
 what assistance we can have from that; but alas! there is hard- who wa
 ly any such thing as natural Courage left to a Man in this availabl
 case.

*a S. se. For wickedness, condemn'd by her own witness, is very
ad of merous, and being press'd with conscience, always forecasteth
nce. rievous things; Wisd. 17. 11. and, what between their
as offerings and their fears, the Buffetings of their own Reason
ingnd Conscience, and the terrours of God set in array against
hem, the stout hearted are spoil'd, their spirits quite broken,
had, and the strong Men bow themselves. Job, 6. 4.*

Nor is this the worst of the case neither: But, as Philoso-
phers observe that *the corruption of the best things is worst*, and
the most healthy Constitutions bear sickness worst, so here,
the greater our natural Courage and Sprightliness us'd to be,
the greater will our dejection and uneasiness now prove: The
higher and faster our Spirits us'd to run, the more sensibly
shall we now feel this cruel damp and check upon them.

But are those without us no better able to assist us, than we
are our selves? Can our Friends, who have help'd to support
us under so many and great Afflictions, do us no good in this,
our Friends! what Friends, can we think, will be able
to save us from the inward scourgings of our own Minds: to
shield us from God's wrath, and keep off the *Arrows of his
vengeance* from us? What Medicines can our Friends bring to
heal our wounded Minds with, but Reasonings and Argu-
ments and with what Arguments shall they plead for us, like
those with which we plead against our selves? What one
Topic of Comfort have they left in store, to pour, like *Balm*,
into the deep and ghastly wounds of such a troubled Spirit? will
they not rather, like *Job's* Friends, tho' with much more
reason, *Heap up words against us and shake their Heads at us?*
Job. 16. 4.

Could they indeed, as it is pretended the Church of Rome
can, out of their Treasury and over stock of good works,
supply us: and, by so doing, make us as truly Righteous in
God's sight, as if they had been our own; this, tho' it would
not support us under a wounded Spirit, yet would take away
the cause of it, and by that means, remove it from us. But
alas! we never had but one Friend in the whole World, who
who was able, in the least, to plead any merits that could be
available for us: and him we have made our Enemy.

But

But has, our old Friend, the Devil no comfort or support for us? Oh no! All that ever he was able to do, to support against these Terrors, was, by Lyes and false Glosses, Sophistry and Artifice, to make us doubt of the reality of them, or else make us impute them to some such cause, which should take away the dreadfulnes of them. But these shill serve now no more; for too plainly we feel them, to be able to doubt of the reality of them: too clear account we have of them, in God's Justice and Threatnings, to leave room for dispute about the cause of them. Besides, even in this sense *Greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world;* 1 John 4. 4. our own awakn'd Consciences, and the hand of God within us, are an over-match for the Devil, and defy all his Willes and Stratagems, all his Strength and Power, how many and great soever. Nay so refin'd and unprejudic'd are our Understandings now become, that there is nothing clearer to us, than that the Devil himself did all, that in spite of his malice he could, to bring us into this woful Condition: and therefore, tho' he were able, is not to be rely'd upon for help in it. Nay farther, it is now very plain to us, that the Devil himself is in our very case, and yet cannot help himself, and, if he cannot keep himself from *trembling* at the Thoughts of his own Condition, in vain must it be to expect that he should Inspire us with Courage enough not to *tremble* at our own. James 2. 19. No, the Thoughts of his *trembling* must necessarily increase ours: his inability to help himself must necessarily spoil all our hope and confidence in him.

Still perhaps it will be pretended, that a Dose of Physick, or of Wine, Good Company, Exercise, or Diversion, give us certain ease, and free us from these troublesome Terrors of our own Minds. And, supposing that they could do yet what is this to the purpose? We are not talking of getting rid of them (for that no doubt may be easily done, for some time, by a sufficient Dose of any Opiate or strong Liquor, or any other way of rendring us insensible; nay it is to be hoped, generally speaking, that it may be done, for ever, in a much better way, by Repentance and a thorough Reformation of Heart and Life) but we are talking of maintaining and

supporting our selves, of keeping our selves from sinking and
 responding, of bearing up with any measure of cheerfulness
 and courage, while we are *awake* and in our right Senses, and
 under the actual sting and smart of them. This is to bear af-
 flictions, the other only to seek hiding places for them; and
 what will all the *Physic, Wine, Good company, Exercise, or*
Diversion, in the World help towards this? What manner of
 relation or dependance, in the least, is there, between those,
 which are *burthens* purely *Spiritual*, and these which are helps
 purely *Corporal*? As well might we hope to support a wound-
 ed Spirit, by giving it a staff to rest upon, as by such un-
 suitable and useless helps as these. Besides, give me leave to
 tell you that these ways of stifling and lulling asleep Distempers,
 of the Mind as well as of the Body, are but meer Cheats and
 Impositions upon our selves, and, in the end, only tend to
 increase and inflame the violence of our Distempers: and to
 make them, like Latent Fires not thoroughly extinguish'd,
 burn but the more fiercely, when they break out, and get
 head next.

What then shall we do, whither shall we go, or to whom
 shall we fly, for help? Of whom shall we seek for Succour,
 but of thee, O *Father of Mercies, and God of all comfort*? 2.
 Cor. 1. 3. When our own Reason and Strength have failed
 us, when our *Fathers and Mothers have forsaken us*, when
 all the Powers of the World (except thine own) could help us
 no longer, then hast thou been wont to *take us up* Ps. 27.
 10. To thee therefore let us come, and cry for Mercy. But,
 Oh unhappy State! we dare not so much as lift up our Eyes
 towards Heaven, whence we can expect nothing, but dread-
 ful flashes of Vengeance and *fiery Indignation*, The very
 Name of God, which us'd to be comfortable to us, in all our
 other Afflictions, is now become one of our greatest Torments
 in this, and those kind of pleasing Appellations of *Father* and
Saviour, are turn'd into those severe and affrightning ones,
 of *Judge* and *Avenger*. We have provok'd God beyond all
 measure, his *wrath is waxen hot* against us, and we cannot
 reasonably look for any thing else, but that it should break
 out

out in plagues and bitterest Judgments upon us. For he ind univ
 God that *hateth all workers of iniquity: he will not pity, deserve*
spare, nor have mercy upon the ungodly: but he will rain upell, D
them snares, fire and brimstone and a burning tempest: this shnd the
be the portion of their cup. Ps. 5. 5. Jer. 13. 4. Ps. 11. 6. leplorat

Oh dreadful State! unutterable Torments! beyond, infinivard G
 ly beyond, our Strength, yet, distitute even of the least supave acc
 port! never so much need of succour, never so little of it: Oainly, a
 Reason and Religion persecute us: our Natural Courage fa~~st~~ly,
 us: our Friends stand by and cannot help us, nay, whany mea
 worse, condemn us: the Devil neither will, nor indeed caying V
 asist us: and which is yet infinitely worse (oh how shall o run t
 bear to hear it!) our God himself, Who us'd to be our cehan to
 rain Friend and Helper, is now become our most bitter an All th
 implacable Enemy, and daily throws new loads of Sorrow urom va
 on us. ind the

And, if all this be not sufficient to convince Men of the in Scrip
 supportableness of a wounded Conscience (as in such a case hedding
 this, where Men are unwilling to be convinc'd, who can ne had t
 what is sufficient?) you may be pleased to take for farthweary o
 confirmation. him, w

Secondly, The proof of *Experience*; And, if you want thing adm
 (I mean, if you have never had it within your own breast: vards C
 from the lesser Fears, disquietudes and Uneasinesses, which after co
 Commission of one, or but few Sins, have there enkindlen contin
 you are not able to judge of the intolerableness of those Tot cannot
 ments, which are the effects of a long and habitual course 15. 16.
 Sin) you may soon have it, by taking a short view of thof wicke
 miserable Wretches, especially upon their Sick and Dyin and-w
 Beds, who are *possess'd* with this *Legion of Devils*, a wounds bomida
 Spirit. Some of which you may behold in still and fullroubled
 Silence, by their dreadful, sad, ghastly, desponding Lookness sm
 discovering Pains, too great to be express'd, flaming and rapense of
 ing in their inmost Souls. Others, in sudden Fits and Starto Death
 crying out, groaning, shrieking and complaining of Tortions, t
 ments that as much transcend all those, which Human Art our Savi
 Malice ever could invent, as they do the most commen arisen fro
 most easy and gentle Pains of Nature. Others in Agoni prehens

he ind unintermitting Torments, even in their sleep (if it may
 ty, deserve that name) as well as when awake, roaring out *Death,*
in up Hell, Damnation and *Eternity*, and cursing both themselves
 his sh and their false Friends, who cheated them into this sad and
 6. leplorable Condition. Others again ready to burst with in-
 finivard Grief, and incapable of any the least Ease, till they
 st suave accused themselves of such Crimes, as, they know cer-
 it: Oainly, a most ignominious and painful Death will follow. And
 ge faastly, Others, still more desperate than the rest, not able in
 whany measure to sustain their weighty load of Guilt and Woe,
 ed caying Violent Hands upon themselves, and choosing rather
 hall to run the hazard, even of Hell it self, in another World,
 our chan to bear the lashes of a Guilty Conscience, in this.
 er an All this I could yet farther illustrate and confirm to you,
 ow from various examples of People of all sorts; (not even Princes
 and the greatest of Men themselves excepted) As from those,
 the in Scripture, of *Cain*, whose consciousness of his guilt, in
 a casehedding his Brother's blood, and of the Provocation which
 can he had thereby given to Divine Vengeance, made him even
 farthweary of his life, and afraid that every body, that should find
 him, would kill him; Genes. 4. 13, 14. of *Saul*, who, be-
 ant thng admonish'd by the Prophet *Samuel* of his disobedience to-
 east: wards God, and of God's rejection of him thereupon, never
 which after could enjoy any true ease and peace of Mind, but liv'd
 kindlen continual grief and anguish of Soul, troubled sea, when
 se Tot cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, 1 Sam. ch.
 ourse 15. 16. &c. as *Isaiah* Elegantly, describeth the Condition
 of thos wicked Men; Is. 59. 20. of *Belshazzar*, who, when the
 Dyin and-writing upon the wall put him in mind of his impious and
 roundbomidable Life, had his countenance chang'd, and his thoughts
 l fullerouled him so, that the joynts of his lions were loosed, and his
 Look knees smote one against another; Dan. 5. 6. of *Herod*, whose
 nd rapense of his baseness and injustice, in putting *John the Baptist*
 i Staro Death, had fill'd him with such fears, jealousies and suspi-
 of Totions, that, as soon as ever he heard of the Miracles done by
 n Art our Saviour, he presently concluded that *John the Baptist* was
 nen arisen from the dead, and was greatly perplex'd with the ap-
 Agoni prehensions of what was like to befall him for his wickedness;
 at Mar.

Matt. 14. 1: Mark 6. 14. Luke 9. 7. and lastly of Judas, trouble and remorse, upon his having betray'd his Master, were so that not being able to bear them, he became his own Executioner soon put an end to a miserable and insupportable Life. Matt. 2. From those of *Tiberious, Caligula, Nero, Orestes, Oedipus* and *Alcibiades* taken out of Prophane History, who were all tortur'd by the Furies the Heathens lov'd to speak (that is, as * *Tully* very honestly explains by their own evil Consciences) to that degree, that they were like distracted, not knowing what to do, or whither to turn themselves; ease; fearful of Thunder and Lightning, as if they had been the bellows and flashes of hell it self; seeming to themselves to be haunted perpetually by the Ghosts, of those whom they have injur'd; nay sometimes torn even into real distraction; committing the most horrid outrages upon themselves, tearing out their own eyes, and making frequent attacks upon themselves, always weary of life, and yet when they were free of any reflection, fearful to the utmost of death. As also from the modern and very remarkable instance of *Francis Spira* in *Germany*, above all, from the dying Confession of a Noble and Illustrious person of our own Nation, who declar'd (and oh that his words may sink deep into our hearts!) that his Sorrow for his sins was a most penetrating and consuming Sorrow: so that, though in his body he suffered extreme Pain for several weeks, yet the Agonies of his Mind sometimes swallow'd up the Sorrow what he felt in his Body; and that, tho' there were nothing to come of this life, yet all the Pleasure he had ever known in Sin (and he had known as many, as most Men that ever liv'd) were not worth that Torture he felt in his Mind. * But I hope that what has been already said, upon this Head has been sufficient; and, I fear, the time and your patience earnestly upon me to hasten in the

Last place, to conclude with some *Practical* Reflections, upon what has been already said, And this, with all possibly brevity.

Hence then we learn that the greatest evils of this Life are brought upon themselves, and ought not therefore to be charg'd upon God. What Affliction have we comparable for the sting and smart of it, to that of a wounded Conscience; And, next to that, to that of a mind ruffled and disordered with *lusts* and *passions*; and whence come these, but from our own sin and folly?

Hence also it plainly appears, that there is such a thing, as an essential difference between what we call *moral good and evil*: Our own Reason, Conscience, and the *Divine Providence* it self, inwardly commanding and plauding and rewarding that; while, on the other hand, they do forbid, condemn and punish this,

Hence likewise we have an evident proof, both that there will cer-

* *Lib. 1. de leg. Suet. vit. Tib. cap. 67. Id. vit. Calig. cap. 51. Id. vit. Ner. cap. 34. Sophocles. Elcc. Id. Oedip. Ovid. Met. lib. 9*

† *Sleidan. Hist. Reformation. Fol. 21.*

* *32. Burnet's Life of Lord Rochester, p. 128. 12.*

the future punishments for the wicked, and that they will be very great. There will be an *Hell*: Else why has Nature implanted fears of it in our Minds? the torments of it, we may be sure, will be very great: Else how comes it to pass that the foretastes of them are so, even in this World, which is not the proper Place for finishing and consummating the torments of the Wicked?

Hence too we may draw an Argument for the Vindication of God's Providence, in part, in respect of the worldly prosperity of Wicked Men; for tho' they may outwardly seem to succeed and live at ease in the eye of the World: Yet, so long as it is frequently their Case, *to have terrors upon them, darkness hid in their secret places, and a fire not blown consuming them*, Job 20. 25, 26. (as Zophar elegantly describes the Condition of wicked Men) this must needs be a mighty damp and sowing to all their Enjoyments, and make them, upon the whole, not those very happy Men that they are too apt to pass with us for.

In a word, Hence it appears what a very foolish and dangerous thing a life of Sin is: which both in its own Nature, and thro' the just judgment of God, tends to bring upon us continual uneasinesses, grief and anxiety of Mind here; and these too, as a sure and infallible pledge of much greater Torments hereafter. As also what a barbarous and cruel thing it is, to entice and draw in other Men, more especially our Friends, to an habitual course of Sinning. Can any Man deserve the Name of a Friend from him, whom he would perswade, and even constrain to do such things, as would certainly give him a fit of the Stone or Stangury? Much less can he from him, whom he would engage in the doing of that, which must necessarily bring him under the pangs and lashes of a guilty Mind, to which those compar'd are even as nothing.

To conclude all: Hence we learn both of what importance it is to us to preserve our Minds and Consciences *pure and undisturb'd*, or, at least, if we have been so unhappy as to wound them, to get them *heal'd* again as fast as ever we can: And likewise, what is the best and speediest way of doing this. Since the *torments* of a *wounded spirit* are so great, as have been

been proved, it is impossible, if we consider them, but we should be *afraid* of them, and be most ready to do our most towards keeping our selves clear of them, Since the of it is so intolerable, when we are under it, we must not our selves and our own ease, if we do not make all the we possibly can to *get rid* of it; *get rid* of it, I say, for *be* we cannot. The wisest and the easiest way, no doubt, be careful to keep clear of the torments, from the beginning. And this can only be done, by keeping clear, as far as we able, of all sins, which are, as you have seen, the certain of them, *Would you never be afflicted in Mind, live w Would you be secure, do no evil, Isdor. Seneca*, or rather speak in the Words of the Apostle, *Wouldst thou not be af of thy Conscience, do that which is good, and thou shalt b praise of the same.* But, if thou art already entangled beset with these torments, and wantest to get rid of them; but rid of thy sins, which are the *sting* of them, and shall *wound* thee no more. And there is but one way doing this, and that is, by Repentance, and turning selves to God. This, through the Mercies of God in Ch Jesus, shall blot out all our sins, and consequently put an to our pain, take away our guilt, and with that our Pun ment. Then shall God *give us rest from our sorrow*, nay *turn it into Joy.* His Holy Spirit will there again vou safe to take up his Abode with us, and to fill us with his b fed fruits of Love, Joy, Peace, &c. and to heal us and g us strong consolation, now that we have fled for Refuge lay hold upon the hope set before us. Amend your L therefore, and turn, that your sins may be put away, and the times of refreshing may come from the Presence of Lord.

F I N I S.

The Certainty of Hell-Torments from Principles of Nature and Reason.

S E R M O N II.

M A T T H. 25. 41.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye Cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

THese words, which are part of our Saviour's own description of the *last Judgment*, and contain in them that most dreadful *Sentence*, which shall then be pronounc'd upon all the *workers of iniquity*, do very naturally lead me to treat of the *Certainty, Greatness and Eternity of Hell-Torments*; Matt. 7. 23. the first of which is imply'd in those words, *Then shall he, Christ the Judge of the World, say unto them on the left hand, the wicked, Depart from me, ye cursed, &c.* The second, in those, *Depart from me, into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*; and the third and last in the word *Everlasting*;

And I hope I shall not be thought tedious, if I discourse somewhat largely (tho' with all convenient Brevity) upon these *points*: which are *points* of the highest *moment*. and *importance* to Religion and the Souls of Men; as being *Motives* which have a much surer and more powerful Influence over the *Minds* and *Actions* of Men, and which more effectually tend to reduce them from their *Sinful Courses*, and to engage and confirm them in contrary habits of *Piety* and *Vertue*, than any other whatsoever. Nay, even than the *Joys of Heaven* it self: it being but too too plain from *experience*, that it is very much owing to the *Fears of Hell*, that Men are at all at the pains of *qualifying* themselves for the *Joys of Heaven*: and that far greater numbers are aw'd and frighten'd into their *Duty* by the dread of that, than allur'd and persuaded to it, by the hope of this.

First then let us consider the *Certainty* of *Hell Torments*, or the assurance which we have that there will be a place of Torment Luk. 16. 28. for the wicked, in another Life. And this is plainly asserted almost in every page of the Gospel: that it is utterly impossible that a true Christian, who sincerely believes that to contain the Mind and Will of God, should have any the least doubt of it. Nay, to such an one, the words of my Text finally (proceeding from our Saviour's own mouth. and being clear and express, as they are, in this matter) must needs give abundant conviction.

But because (such is the unhappiness of our Times!) we live in an Age when many, even of those who call themselves Christians, will not be satisfy'd with Scripture Evidence: but cry out aloud for proofs from Nature and Reason, and profess themselves entirely willing to submit and resign up themselves to these; I shall, in condescension to these mens demands, tho' very unreasonable ones coming out of their mouths (that so we may manifest our earnest desire, by any means to gain them: 1 Cor. 9. 22. that we may, if not convince, Rom. 1. 20. yet leave them without excuse: and above all, that we may do Justice to the Christian Religion, by shewing what an exact Harmony there is between that and the Principles of Nature and Reason) at present wholly argue from such proofs; and, from mens common Fears and Apprehensions of future Punishments; their general consent to the acknowledgment of them, and the reasonableness of the thing it is our endeavour to make it unexceptionably plain, to all unprejudiced Persons, that, in the final issue and event of things, it must necessarily so be, that the wicked shall be turn'd into Hell, and the Nations that forget God. Ps. 9. 17.

The first thing that comes under our consideration is, the common fears and apprehension of mankind as to future Punishments. But having, as I hope, sufficiently prov'd these in my foregoing Discourse, I shall presume that I may be excus'd from insisting any farther upon the proof of them here; especially considering that what I have there said will receive mighty confirmation and be no longer disputed, if there be any force in what I now about to say.

Secondly, Concerning the general consent and acknowledgment of mankind, as to Punishments, and that we may go on, in the consideration of these, with all possible clearness: I shall

First, make proof of the matter of fact here alledg'd, that there have ever been such a general consent and acknowledgment of mankind, as to future Punishments. And

Second

Secondly, Shew how this proves the certainty of them:

First, I am to make proof of the *matter of fact* here alledg'd; that there have ever been such a *general consent* and *acknowledgment* of mankind, as to *future Punishments*. And how can I do this better? than by beginning with the most *ancient Nations* of the World, of which we have any account either in *Sacred* or *Prophane History*, and shewing down from *them* even to our *own times* (as far as the *glimmering light* of *Antiquity* will enable me, and the *limits* of my *present Discourse* permit) *plain footsteps* of such a *consent* and *acknowledgment*; and that too more especially among *those Nations*, which have been most remarkably *distinguish'd*, above others, by their *Politeness* and *Civility*, their *Improvements* in *Arts* and *Sciences*, and their *discreet* use and exercise of their *Rational Faculties*.

And *first*, as to *Sacred History*; tho' it cannot certain'y be collected from thence, what was the belief of the Descendants of *Adam*, from the time of his fall to the settling of the *Jewish Nation*, as to this point: yet it is well known, that there is a very ancient Tradition among the *Jews*, concerning *Abel's* belief of it, and the offence which he gave to his Brother *Cain*, by his profession of such his belief; which was, as the Tradition saith, the occasion of *Cain's* falling upon him. [*Selden. de jure Nat. & Gent. juxta discipl. Ebraeorum. l. 7. c. 4.*] And the early Institution of Sacrifices, to please and appease God, seems to make it plain, that the Men of the first Ages of the World had a general notion of God's being a *Rewarder* of *them that diligently seek him*, and, on the contrary a *Punisher* of *those that neglect or disobey him*. And this general notion, join'd with their own experience, that God did not always reward the Good and punish the Bad in this World (which was remarkably manifest, almost from the very beginning of the World, in the case of *Cain* and *Abel*) must surely have led them on to conclude, that he would do it in another. Besides, they had so many sensible demonstrations of God's observing the behaviour of men, and that too with a design to reward or punish them according to their Deserts (on the one side, in his extraordinary care of good men, as *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and more especially *Enoch*, whom he took alive out of this World to himself, and by so doing, made him a sure proof of a future Life, and state of Happiness, for good men; and, on the other side, in his extraordinary judgments upon Sinners, as in the Destruction of the Old World by the Deluge, in the confounding and scattering the builders

of Babel, and more particularly in the raining down fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and thereby, as it went, shewing Men a specimen of that Lake of Fire and Brimstone, which he had prepar'd for the wicked in another Life) that we have all the reason in the Word to believe, that they had no manner of doubt, as to this point.

And then as to the *Jews*, * it is undeniably evident from their *Talmud* and *Targums*, as well as from the particular acknowledgments of the Antientest and most Learned of their † *Rabbins* that they did explicitly believe an *Hell*, or place of Torments, for the Wicked, in another Life. And accordingly we find *Eleazar*, § one of the principal Scribes of the Jews, and aged man, and discreet, when he was advis'd by his Friends to make as if he did eat of the flesh, taken from the Sacrifice commanded by the King, that in so doing he might be deliver'd from Death, with great scorn rejecting their advice, upon this consideration; That tho' for the present time he should be deliver'd from the punishment of Men, yet should he not escape the hand of the Almighty, either alive or dead. 2 Macc. 6. 26. And the Son of Sirach tells us, that Sinners are kept against the mighty day of their punishment. Ecclus. 12. 6. And the Author of the book of *Wisdom*, that horrible is the end of the unrighteous Generation; that when they cast up their accounts of their sins, they shall come with fear and shall feel a judgment worthy of God, *Wisdom* 3. 19. 4. 20. 12. 26. And the seven *Bethren*, mention'd in the *Maccabees* were plainly full of the belief of a state of future Retribution, 2 Macc. 7. And our Saviour, we find in the New Testament, frequently talk'd to the *Jews* of *Hell*, as of a place, the notion of which they were well acquainted with: *Matt.* 5. 29, 30. *Mark* 9. 43. 45. 47. and they never objected against, or seem'd to have been surpriz'd at his so doing. And *Celsus* * makes his *Jew* tell the Christians that, as to the rewards of good men, and punishments by fire for the bad in another Life, they teach nothing new to the *Jews*, in that. And it is well known that the present *Jews* make the (a) belief of future punishments a necessary Article of their Creed: and this, no doubt, as they think, who are very tenacious of the Traditions of their Forefathers, exactly (b) agree

* Vid. Bp. Pearson on the Article of Life everlasting, † Windet de vitæ funtorum statu Sect. 7, 8, 9. § Menasseh Ben Israel, de Creatione. probl. 19

* Orig. cont. Cels. p. 60. 61. (a) Maimon. de fundamento legis. (b) De Veil. Catechis. Judæorum, p. 13

able to the sentiments and profess'd acknowledgement of their *Forefathers*, in this matter.

I have but one thing more to observe to you, out of Sacred History; and that is, that there is mention there made of *Sacrifices of the Dead*, which were offer'd by the Worshippers of *Baal-peor*, Ps. 106. 28. By which *Sacrifices of the Dead* (c) some Learned men suppose we are to understand Sacrifices offer'd to the Infernal Gods, for the sake of the Dead, or to incline the Infernal Gods to be merciful to the dead, And, (d) if so, we have here a very antient proof of the belief of future punishments, in the Heathen World.

Secondly, As to prophane History: the *Phenicians* and *Aegyptians* (the most Antient People which we have any account of in that) had some such Rites in relation to their dead, as seem evidently to testify their belief of future punishments for the wicked. (e) Such were their *χοαι'*, which were not only offerings to the Ghosts of their departed Friends, to appease and gratify them, but likewise Sacrifices to the Infernal Gods, join'd with prayers to them, that they would be kind and propitious to their departed Friends. And thus much *Plutarch* seems to intimate when, in his Consolatory Letter to his Wife, upon the death of his little daughter, he tells her, that there was no need of these *χοαι'* upon her account, because it was generally agreed that Such young Children went out of this, World, to a better and Diviner State. Besides, we know very well that all other Nations receiv'd their Theology, as they did most of their other Sciences, from the *Phenicians* and *Aegyptians*; and consequently, whatever evidences we find of a belief of future punishments among other Nations, as we do a great many, we ought in all reason to refer to the *Phenicians* and *Aegyptians*, as originally deriv'd from them. Especially considering, that *Diodorus Siculus* expressly tells us (a) of the *Aegyptians*, that the *Greeks* imitated their Funeral Rites, in relation to the punishments of the wicked in Hell, and the pleasant meadows provided for the good. And the *Greeks*, that ingenious and polite People, were indeed so fully perswaded of the certainty of future punishments,

(c) V. Selden. de Diis Syris, p. 164. & (d) Poli Syn. in loc. (e) V. Jac phil. Thomassin, c. 37. de Votis Diis Manibus oblati. & Jacob. Guther, c. 17. de Inferiis & c. 12. de precibus, quæ in mortuorum memoria fundebantur.
(a) Diodor. Sicul. Bibl. L. 1.

that many of their learned Men (b) are said to have written books professedly concerning them. And their wisest, and gravest Philosophers, as well as their Poets (who yet are by no means to be slighted in this case, as having been, as Origen (c) call them, *the first Divines amongst the Greeks and the Fathers of their Opinions*: and as (d) Plato, *the Fathers and Guides of wisdom*) have given us very particular descriptions of the *Torments of the wicked in Hell*. And therefore Justin Martyr tells (e) them that, *what we Christians say, as to the punishments of wicked Men after death, and the rewards of good Men, we say the very same thing with their Poet and Philosophers*. And much to the same purpose Eusebius and Theodoret. (f)

Nor to the *Latins*, the next famous People of the World for Learning and Sagacity, fall a whit short of the *Greeks* in their Opinions as to this point; but rather seem exactly to have copy'd after them in this, as well as in most other matters: observing the same Rites as to their Dead, (g) significant of this their belief of future punishments; and making much the same declarations concerning them, and giving much the same descriptions of them, that they had done. And accordingly Tertullian, and the (h) others *Apologists* for the *Christian Faith* to the *Latins* frequently tell them, that their *Learned Men* agree so exactly with the *Christians*, in what they hold as to future punishments, that it hardly to be doubted, but that they first receiv'd their knowledge of these things, from the *Christians Ancestors*, or their *Books*.

To the *Greeks* and *Romans* we may add several other Nations which were contemporary with them, as the (i) ancient *Indians*, the *Gauls*, the *Britons*, the *Geiæ*, the *Hyperborei*, &c. who are all upon Record in History, for agreeing, either directly or by natural consequence, in the belief of future punishments for the wicked.

And then, if from these we pass on to the following Ages of the World, we shall find abundantly more ample Testimony of the universality of this belief. We shall find it an Article both the *Christian* and *Mahometan* Creeds: (k) and so readily consented to by all who embrac'd either of those Religions.

(b) Windet. p. 5. (c) L. 1. contra Cels. p. 19. (d) Plato in Lyfide. Just. Martyr. Apol. 1. p. 40. (f) Euseb. præ par. l. 2. c. 20. l. 13. Theodor. de sine. & Judicio, fol. 154. (g) Inferiæ.

(h) Tertull. Apol. c. 47. Minut. Fel. Octav. Laet. de vita beata, l. 1. sect. 7. Arnob. adv. Gentes. 12. (i) Porphy. de Abst. l. 4. v. Strabo l. Idem. l. 4. Edda Mythol. c. 3. Plato, Axiochus. (k) Alcoran. c. 20. & Plutarch. de occultis vivendo, & consol. ad. Unor.

that there can be no manner of room to doubt but that it had been, as some of the Heathens express it, a most ancient and standing opinion in the World, and, and such as they had ever look'd upon to be a settl'd Law (l) amongst their Gods. We shall find it amongst our new Discoveries of the *West*, and the remotest parts of the *East, Indies*. (m) And, the mote carefully and narrowly we search into this matter the more certain ground shall we find for the belief of it.

At present then the account of this matter plainly stands thus Above half, perhaps near two thirds of the World, I mean *Christians* and *Mahometans*, do explicitly profess their belief of of this Article of *future punishments*. And if out of the remaining part we take all the *Jews*, who are of the same belief as to this point: and likewise those of the *Pagans* themselves, who are no small number, that agree in it directly: and many others of them, who hold the immortality of the Soul, and the future rewards of good Men, which are implicit arguments of this belief and naturally lead to it. And then, if we set aside the very Barbarous of all, who differ from the rest of Mankind almost in every thing else as well as this, who seem to live without thinking, without order, and indeed without so much as any one settl'd Principle, but what meer necessity makes for them; we shall find but very few in the whole World, that are worthy the name of Men, who do not, directly or by natural consequence, acknowledg their belief of *future punishments for the wicked*.

So that, upon the whole, this acknowledgment seems to have been as ancient as Mankind themselves, and as wide spread, as the several Quarters of the World. There seems to have been, as *Seneca* expresseth (n) it, a general consent among Men, either in fearing or worshipping the infernal Powers. And therefore, to use *Tully's* Argument. (o) If the consent of all Men be the voice of nature, and all wheresoever dispers'd, do agree that there is something that belongs to those, who are departed out of this Life; and if as he farther urgeth it, all Men express a concern, and that too of the highest nature, about those things which are to come upon them after Death; what reason can we possibly give, why we should not consent to this voice of nature, why we should not believe, as the rest of Mankind have ever done, in this matter?

(l) *Plato, Gorg.* Bp. *Stillingsfleet's App.* Orig. Sac. l. c. 1. (m) *Lerius Xaverius.*

(n) *Seneca. Ep.* 117. (o) *Tull Tusculan Qu.* l. 1.

But I must not quit this point thus. I am well aware that our Age abounds with Persons that will pretend, that they have a great deal to object against the proof, which I have here offered. And therefore, yet farther to make good what I have advanced, and to leave it as little liable to doubts and uncertainty as is possibly; I shall most readily give these Persons a full and fair hearing, and I hope, by God's Assistance, as full and fair an answering too. And

First, Say they, it cannot Be deny'd but that there have been in all Ages of the World, many persons, and some too even in the first Rank for Learning and Knowledge, such as *Lucretius*, *Tully*, *Seneca*, &c. nay, even whole Sects of learned Men, as the *Sadducees* among the *Jews*, and the *Epicureans* among the *Heathens*, who have not only publickly declar'd, that they had no apprehensions and fears of future punishments themselves, but have likewise scoff'd at and ridicul'd them in others; an inconsistency, which it is highly improbable they would have been guilty of, had these been the receiv'd and popular Sentiments of the times they liv'd in.

Now, in answer to this, a great many things may be said. As

First, That many, if not most, of those who have profess'd deny'd that they had any fears or apprehension of future punishments were prejudic'd and incompetent judges of their own natural sentiments in this case; Men, who had liv'd so as to have made it their Interest that there should be no such punishments, and who consequently gave not due heed to what Nature and Reason were ready to Dictate to them, upon their Head, but spake the Language of their partail Wishes and Affections, rather than their sincere Understanding, about it: or at least Men, who liv'd in very wicked times, when the fashion ran high against such notions as these, and were violently carry'd away with it. And, for these reasons, the Judgments of these men, as to this point, are not much to be regarded. (p) And this, it is well known, was very much the case of the *Sadducees*, the *Epicureans*, nay indeed of all the *Heathens* in general, who according to St. Paul's Rom. 1. *black and dismal* description of them, must have been prejudic'd to the utmost, by their abominably wicked and flagitious lives, against the belief of

ture punishments. This, *Xaverius* tells us, was the case of a *Sect* among the *Japanese*, who deny'd the Immortality of the Soul. And I dare appeal to any unprejudic'd person, whither this be not generally the case of those amongst us, who pretend to call in question the belief of future punishments.

Secondly, That the Professions of many Men in this case have been plainly insincere: their fears having often broken out, even in spite of them, and given their Tongues the lie, (as has been often seen, when these Men have been brought into great straits and afflictions, and more especially within danger of death) and their Actions (like those of the Emperour *Caligula*, (q) whose real fears the *Thunder* discover'd, how *Atheistical* so ever he ventur'd to be in fair and calm weather) betray'd that inward sense of their minds, which they in vain endeavour'd to suppress and smother.

Thirdly, That, as to what concerns Learned Men in particular: besides, that some of them were proud and self-conceited, Men that affected to appear wiser and braver than the rest of the World, and delighted in contradicting and opposing it's most common notions and maxims, especially if they seem'd to have any thing of cowardise or pusillanimity in them, as they fancied those of future punishments to have and this was the case of the *Stoicks* in general; that others have been mis-represented, and falsly suppos'd to have declar'd against future punishments, whilst they only declar'd against the *Poets fanciful representations* of them: That several, who in one part of their works have seem'd to speak against and scoff at future punishments, yet in other parts, and those perhaps the most serious and best deserving our regard, have as plainly declar'd for them; and lastly, that others, who are pretended to have given their private Sentiments against us, in this cause, yet have freely acknowledged us to have the Ancients on our side, in it. Besides all this, I say, it is plain that they all write against these notions, as vulgar and common Errours at least, and by so doing own that we have the people with us, who generally speak the language of nature more sincerely and unprejudicely, than learned Men themselves; and moreover, that many of them maintain such Principles (such for instance as the immortality of the Soul, and the certainty of future rewards for the vertuous, &c.) as

(q) *Sueton, in vit, Calg. c. 51.*

do strongly, whither they saw or would grant it or no, in the certainty of future punishments for the wicked.

Lastly, That the numbers of these Men have been always very small, and even nothing, if compar'd with those, who have made a contrary Profession. The *Sadducees*, a small, and upstart Sect, against the whole body of the *Jews*: an handful of Learned Men among the *Heathen*, against a far greater number as Learned and the whole populace into the Bargain. And consequently the Authority of these few can signify very little against the general verdict of mankind.

Secondly, It is farther objected: That there is all the reason in the world to believe that the greatest part, by much, those who do outwardly acknowledge and profess their belief of future punishments for the wicked, yet dissemble their real Sentiments, and make this Profession only for fashion's sake, because it is undeniably plain that their whole course of Life is such, as if they really believ'd nothing less.

Now, tho' I cannot but take notice that those of us, who profess that we believe future punishments, will have a great deal to answer for, if we shall be any ways accessory towards the giving such an handle or bare pretence as this for the rejecting the belief of them; and must therefore most earnestly exhort all Christians, at their utmost peril, to beware of this; yet I think it will be very easy to show, that this *Objection* is of no manner of force to prove, what it here aims at. For

First, It is evident from Reason that the lives of men can never pass for certain proofs and indication of the inward and real Sentiments of their minds, any where but there, where we have good ground to suppose that men do design and endeavour to conduct and govern their lives, by the real and natural Sentiments of their minds. But this we are so far from having any ground to suppose of wicked Man, that we are sure of the quite contrary. We know very well that their lives are not governed by the natural Sentiments of their minds, which they scarce ever consult, much less ever obey, but by the unnatural heat and fury of their lusts and passions: and therefore their lives may indeed very well pass for a true and lively copy and representation of these; but by no means of those. And we can more argue that men do not believe future punishments, because they do not live agreeably to such a belief: than that they do not believe good husbandry better than extravagance, health than sickness, fame than infamy, because they do not act as

they did. Alas ! we see nothing of the man in this case, but his lusts and passions, which quite obscure and hide his reason, and not only hurry him away from under the conduct of it, but even frequently carry him directly against it.

Secondly, We do almost continually find in fact, that there is no manner of correspondence between Mens lives and their real Sentiments, in this case: there being nothing more common than for Men, who have led very wicked Lives, to give us all the Assurance, that men are capable of giving to one another, by words and all other outward Signs, of their having been fully perswaded all along of the certainty of future punishments; and this too at such times, when we can have no manner of reason to doubt, but that these outward Signs are the faithful Expressions of the inward sense of their minds: in times of greatest seriousness, when they have been under heavy afflictions, nay even as they thought, drawing near to death it self. And God knows it is but too too common with these very Men, after all these serious and solemn Declarations of their stedfast belief of a State of future punishment for the wicked, quite to forget themselves, to return again to their vomit, and live as carelessly and wickedly, as if they really had no notion of a future State at all.

From all which it is plain that we are never more mistaken, than when we argue from the lives of wicked men, to the real Sentiments of their minds, in the case before us. They may, and doubtless do most of them, as plainly appears whenever they are heartily frighten'd and brought to be themselves, sincerely believe a State of future punishments; but they live without thinking, and attending to this belief, as they ought to do; and then It is no wonder that it has so very little Influence upon them.

Thirdly, We hear it often objected that the evidences which we produce, both from *Jews* and *Heathens*, for their belief of future punishments, are very dark, imperfect and uncertain; that they say and unsay, destroy in one place what they advanced in another, seem to speak rather by chance and fancy, than by reason, and deliberate judgment, and consequently are not much to be heeded in this matter.

But to this I answer

First, That this Objection, however it may be granted to be true in part, yet is far from being universally so; there being a great many, both of the *Jews* and *Heathens* who have deliver'd their

their belief or future punishments, in such full and express Terms that they seem to come very near the Expressions of the Gospel Revelation it self about them. And, for this reason several of the Ancients, as I hinted before argu'd that the *Heathens* must have had their notions and belief of them, for one way or other, from Divine Revelation.

Secondly, That, so far as this is true, it is not much to be wondred at, nor does much affect the force of those Evidences which we have been arguing from. For, considering that the belief of future Punishments, is a belief against the Grain of Mankind, against their most beloved Lusts and Passions, and consequently a belief which they are to the utmost prejudic'd against, and most unwilling to admit; it cannot be expected that they should all have spoken very fully and without wavering about it, unless we should suppose them to have had the most glaring and irresistible Evidence for it, which we do not pretend to. And I look upon it to be a much better Argument of their real belief of future punishments, that they could not forbear owning them, even in such a manner as they did, than it is of their disbelief of them, that they did not own them in a more clear full and steady manner. Their Affections were against this belief, and that it self is proof enough that the Reason was very strongly for it, otherwise they would never have acknowledg'd and profess'd it, as they have done: if at a

Thirdly, That great Allowances must be made for the time in which many of these Learned Men liv'd, and the Sects of Philosophy which they were of: in which it was fashionable to speak doubtfully and uncertainly of every thing even of the plainest things and most easy to be understood. And can it then be any wonder that those who spoke doubtfully of such things, even of things visible and present, should speak doubtfully of the invisible things of a future State.

Fourthly, That to those who believe the Gospel Revelation made by the Son of God himself to Mankind, it cannot seem at all strange that, before his coming into the World, the notions of a future State should not have all that clearness and certainty, which they were capable of. It being but reasonable to suppose that the Glory of bringing Life and Immortality perfectly to Light, should be reserv'd for the Son of God at his coming. Especialy considering

Lastly, That God did not, in any Age, or in any place of the World, leave himself without sufficient witness of his being

and providence: and that the Conscience of Men did always
 accuse or excuse them, according as they liv'd well or ill; And
 that their notices of a future State of Retribution, when duly
 attended to, were full and clear enough, for the great end for
 which they were design'd, which was to make Men live truly
 good and virtuous Lives. As is plain from the excellent Ex-
 amples of many both *Jews* and *Heathens* with whom these no-
 tices of a future State; such as they were, were found abundant-
 ly sufficient, to deter them from all manner of vice, and to en-
 courage them to and engage them in a steady course of Piety
 and Vertue, notwithstanding the most strong and powerful
 Temptations to the contrary.

Lastly, There is one more Objection still in reserve, which if
 it cannot disprove the general consent of Mankind as to future
 punishments, yet hopes to blunt the edge of it; and that is,
 that some of the learned Men, both among the *Jews* and *Hea-
 thens*, tho' they do acknowledge future punishments for the
 wicked, yet maintain that their punishment shall be only
 annihilation, or an utter extinction of their beings.

But these some, as those Men are pleas'd to call them; who
 use all possible ways of flattering themselves in their infidelity,
 and are for magnifying any thing that may serve for that pur-
 pose, are such a poor handful of Men, even tho' we should put
 the *Jews* and *Heathens* together who were of this Opinion: and
 the general current of those of their own Religions is so strong
 against them in this point, who universally mean, by a state
 of future punishment, a state (not of *annihilation*) but of future
 torments for the wicked, and particularly describe these tor-
 ments, and, that too in a manner so very like to that wrath,
 which has since been reveal'd by the Gospel, against all *Ungodliness*
 and *Unrighteousness of Men*, that one would be almost tempted to
 think that the Divine Spirit, had without their knowledge,
 prophesy'd by them of these things: and moreover this Opinion
 has so very little ground from reason to support it, as I shall
 have occasion to shew in another place, that I cannot think it
 worth my while here, to take any farther notice of it.

But, presuming rather that what has been already said is
 sufficient, to answer that and all other objections which have
 been alledg'd, against our proof of the general consent of
 Mankind as to a future state of punishments, by which I mean
 torments, for the wicked: I shall now proceed, as I at first
 propos'd.

Secondly,

Secondly, To shew how this proves the certainty of these future punishments. And, in order to this, I must desire you to consider,

First, That this is a very good presumptive Argument of the truth of the matter now in debate; it being highly unreasonable to suppose, that much the greater part of mankind, and that too much the wiser and better part, should universally have entertain'd the belief of any thing, without sufficient ground and reason for it. And this Tully himself allows to be a good Argument, for proving the Immortality of the Soul. *We believe, saith he, that the Souls of Men do exist after this Life because of the agreement of all nations as to this matter: For, I know not how, there is fix'd in the minds of men a foreboding expectation of a future life, and this too is most strong, and discovers it self very clearly, in Men of the greatest and profoundest sense and ingenuity.* [Tusculan. Qu. l. i.]

Secondly, That this Argument ought to be of more than ordinary weight with us, in the case before us: because it is plain here, not only that Men are not bias'd to their belief, but the prejudices of *Worldly Interests, carnal Affection, &c.* but farther, that they believe even against all these. And, however on a hasty and eager we may suppose Men to believe such things, they are likely to prove of advantage to them, as the reward of another life, or the like: yet we are sure to find them backward enough (I would to God I could say not too backward) in believing those things, which may probably become hurtful to them, especially so very hurtful, as the Torments of Hell are. And therefore we have all the reason in the world to believe that, where Men universally give their assent in such a case as this, so very much against their strongest Inclination and Affections, they have very powerful and cogent reasons for so doing.

Lastly, That this Argument, taken from the common Fears and Apprehensions, the common Consent and Acknowledgment of Mankind, as to future punishments, is virtually and implicitly an undeniable proof of the truth and certainty of these future punishments. Forasmuch as we are not able to assign any adequate cause of these common Fears and Acknowledgments of mankind as to this matter. but what will undoubtedly prove the truth and certainty of the thing it self.

For as for those causes which are assign'd by some Men who had rather believe any thing than future punishments

mean *Tradition, Human Policy, Education, &c.* Besides that it would puzzle the most sagacious of these men to assign any Original of such *Tradition, Human Policy, &c.* much more any sufficient cause of their universal Prevalency and Success, which will not effectually prove the truth of the matter now in debate. Besides this, I say, I hope I shall be able to make it unexceptionably plain, that these cannot be the *sole* and *adequate* cause of Men's common Notions and Fears, as to this point. The *sole* and *adequate* cause, I say, because I fear it cannot be deny'd, but that they are too often, and in too many persons the cause in part. But that they cannot be totally and universally so, seems to me very evident from these following Reasons.

First, Because we often find those Men possess'd with these Notions and Fears, who have been so far from having been taught them, and train'd up in and accusom'd to them, that, from the very first dawnings of their Understandings, they have had all such things before them, as should rather have prejudiced them to, and settled them in, a quite contrary belief; as the examples of most wicked and irreligious Parents, the constant mocks and scoffings of Prophane Companions at these things, and above all, that almost invincible prejudice in this case, of their own abominably flagitious and ill spent lives. And what account can we be able to give of this, if there be really no more substantial ground for these things, than meer human contrivance and institution?

Secondly, Because these Notions and Fears, when once they have taken possession of the mind, can never be utterly extinguish'd or totally eradicated, as all other meer effects of custom and education may. It is indeed a very difficult thing to get the better of those prejudices which these bring upon us, but by no means an impossible one provided Men come well inclin'd and resolv'd to the work. But we shall be hard put to it to give any one instance of a Man who has been so far able to shake off his Notions and Fears of Hell, that they should never after, when he has been in his sober senses, in a cool, natural, thinking Condition, haunt and perplex him.

Lastly, Because even those very Men, who pretend to have found out this notable secret, that the Notions and Fears of all *Torments* are vain and groundless, without any real foundations, and a meer politic human Fiction, even these very Men, cannot help being haunted and disturb'd by them, as if they had something solid and real in them. They are, but very

very few of them, able to hold out these their pretensions, times of sharp Tryal and Affliction, and fewer yet to hard, as they prophanelly call it, that is, without any softning and relenting manifestations of their Apprehensions of future punishments. But God is often pleas'd, even out of the mouths of these Men, to establish his Truth: and to make them at the better and more certain Witnesses to it, by how much more they had before try'd all possible Ways, and us'd all possible Endeavours, to make themselves doubtful about it, and to rid themselves of the Fears and Apprehensions of it. And what is this but a moral demonstration, that there must be something more in this matter, than these Men pretend?

What then remains, but that we look out for some more competent and sufficient cause of these general Notions and Apprehensions of Mankind, as to future punishments? And what can this be, but either some inward Divine impression of these things upon the minds of all Men: or some outward Divine Revelation, for them (and, if either, much more bound of these: who shall dare to doubt the truth of what God thus teacheth?) or at least, such a suitableness and agreeableness in the nature of the things themselves, to the nature and reason of Mankind, as has made them universally acknowledg'd and receiv'd by them?

And this brings me to consider the Reasonableness of believing that there shall be future punishments for the wicked, on those grounds which we have from reason for the belief of the same. But this, together with the Inferences which might be made from what has been already said, must be the Subject of another Discourse.

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The Certainty of Hell-Torments from Principles of Nature and Reason.

S E R M O N III.

M A T T H. 25. 41.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me ye Cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

I Now come to consider the Arguments, which we have from Reason, for the belief of a future state of punishment for the wicked.

And here, allowing that there is a God (and I do not pretend to argue about future punishments, with such as will not allow that) I mean, a Being of *Infinite Holiness, Justice, Wisdom, Power*, and, in short, of *all possible Perfections*: and the Creator of Man, and of this World in which we live; I think it will be no very difficult matter to establish the belief of future punishments, from Reason, upon pretty clear and sure grounds.

That such a God as this can punish Sinners, in another life, is evident at first sight, and is deny'd by no body: and therefore the only question is what he will do: and I hope soon to show, that we want not store of good Arguments, to induce us firmly to believe that he will do this.

All the Arguments drawn from Reason to prove the Immortality of the Soul, are implicitly and in effect, so many plain proofs of the certainty of future punishments for the wicked. For, besides that our Reason is not able to conceive any so wise and noble End, for which God should have given Men immortal Souls, as that he might thereby have an opportunity of rewarding or punishing them in another life according to their behaviour in this. Besides this, I say, it is evident from the nature of the think it self, that if the Souls
C of

of wicked Men shall exist at all in another life, their very existence must become a punishment to them, they must necessarily exist in misery and torment, Some Torments will naturally arise from that very frame and disposition of mind, of malice, envy, anger, and perhaps vain hankerings after bodily and fleshly Enjoyments, which wicked Men shall carry with them into another Life. Others, from those stinging Reflexions, which they shall there make, upon their past *folly, baseness, ingratitude, undutifulness, and unfaithfulness* to God and their own Reason; which, however they may here make a shift in great measure to divert, or at least very much to alleviate the smart of, by carnal and sensual Pleasures, they will there find (where their Souls shall be no longer imprisoned in such bodies as they now are, which obstruct their natural operations, and help mightily to cloud and obscure their notions of things) cannot possibly be avoided: and that too in the full force, with the most penetrating and cutting Aggravations imaginable. And then farther, tho' we should suppose without any reason, that God will not immediately inflict punitive Punishments upon Sinners in a future State, yet it is plainly against all reason to suppose, that God will give them any assurance that he will never do this: and if not, they, conscious to themselves of their own demerits, must constantly live under the most dismal Fears and Apprehensions of being severely punish'd, by the more immediate Hand of God, at some time or other. And all this put together, even tho' we should suppose nothing more (which yet, before I have done, I have tried to prove we have great reason to do) will make up a very substantial stock of misery and torment, for wicked Men in another Life.

All the Arguments, that prove the certainty of future rewards for good Men in another World, do likewise equally prove the certainty of future punishments for the wicked; and rather more strongly, forasmuch as of the two, punishments seem to be more necessary to attain the end which is aimed at by both, than rewards. And yet Mankind have generally been very ready to allow the force of these Arguments for the certainty of future rewards for good Men: and I verily believe that there would hardly be any one Man in the World, who would in the least doubt of it, were it not for the sake of the Consequence: were it not, that they manifestly see, that the belief of future rewards for good Men must draw after it the

very belief of future punishments for the wicked. And is not this most unreasonable partiality, to reject that Evidence, which we our selves acknowledge to be good and sufficient, as to things which we do like, only because it is apply'd to things which we do not like?

Farther I desire it may be consider'd, that the Necessity of the belief of future punishments for the wicked, even in order to the peace and good government of this World, acknowledged by the very *Heathens*, nay allow'd by the *Atheists* themselves (as is plain from their pretence that this belief is a State-engine, invented; kept up and manag'd by Politicians, to preserve the World in aw and good order) is no mean presumptive Argument of the certainty of such Punishments. For what can be more reasonable to be believ'd, than that the wise and good Creator of the World has always given his Creatures sufficient ground and reason for the belief of that Principle, which is so apperantly necessary for their comfort and well-being in this Life?

To this we may add: That the very nature of Vice it self, as it is wisely contriv'd by the Author of Nature, seems to be a very plain intimation and indication of future punishments. He has thought fit so to order the nature of it, that it shall always be attended with some such evil Circumstances, as shall make it in some measure a punishment to it self: and is not this a sure ground to believe, that he doth take notice of Sin, and judge fit and decree that it shall be punish'd? But then this punishment, which God has interwoven in the nature of Sin, is so *inadequate* to the *demerits* of Sin, that we can only look upon it to be in part of Payment: to be a pledge and earnest of a more *adequate* punishment hereafter, a kind of sensible assurance that, since God has only begun this work in this World, he will perfect it in another.

These Arguments I thought fit to mention, because I really make them to have a great deal in them: enough, if duly attended to, to make full proof of the matter now in debate before us; at least enough to prepare and open the way, for any fuller proof that may be offer'd of it. And I have but barely mention'd them, both because I think the force of them lies in a little compass, and is clear and easy to be apprehended, and also because I design to insist more largely upon a more Regular Argument, drawn up into from, in the following Propositions

First, That God will certainly punish all Sinners, and that too in proportion to their demerits, either in this life, or the next.

Secondly, That God doth not do this, in this present life. And therefore

Lastly, That he will certainly do it, in the next.

The *First* of these Propositions, *Viz.* that God will certainly punish all sinners; and that too in proportion to their demerits either in this life or the next, is that which will need most proof; as being that which wicked Men are most unwilling to be convinc'd of, well knowing that the great stress of the whole cause depends upon it, and that if this be once prov'd a little proof will serve for the other two. I shall therefore chiefly spend my time, in endeavouring to make out the truth and certainty of this *first* Proposition. And, in order to that I must desire you seriously to consider the Arguments, which follow.

First, That God has made Man a punishable Creature, and that this is a strong presumptive Argument that he will punish him for his Sins.

Secondly, That it is very much for God's honour, and agreeable to our best notions of Him and his Divine Attributes to believe that he will punish Sinners: nay, farther that we know not how to reconcile our notions of Him and his Divine Attributes, to a belief that he will not punish them.

Lastly, That God doth very signally and remarkably punish some Sinners: and that from hence it may be reasonably infer'd, that he designs to punish all.

First, That God has made Man a punishable Creature, &c. He who is his Creator, and therefore sole Lord, has given him a Law (one Law at least, as every body must own, that of Reason) to govern himself by: a Law which he cannot possibly be ignorant of, because God has put it in his inward parts, and written it in his very heart, and which therefore wants no sufficient promulgation: and a Law so plain too and easy to be understood, that, as to the greater and more important duties of it, all mankind have generally been agreed about the sense of it. And God has put Man into the counsel of his own hands, left him at perfect Liberty to act according to his own will to choose or refuse, obey or disobey this Law, as he shall think fit. He has given him sufficient knowledge and power both to understand and keep this Law, if he will use them accordingly

accordingly: but he has left it to him to choose whether he will do so or no. From all which it is plain that Mens sins, or transgressions of this Law, must be voluntary, must be their own choice their own proper acts and deeds, and as such, may fairly be imputed to them as faults do partake of this nature of guilt, and if so, are justly lyable to punishment. And how then, I would fain know, could God have declar'd more plainly, by the frame and make of Man, that he design'd to punish him for his sins, than he has done especially considering, as has been before prov'd that he has implainted in the mind of Man, natural presages and expectations of such punishment? And have we not at all the reason in the World to believe that he will punish Sinners, when it is so evident that he has prepar'd and fitted, and as it were mark'd them out, for punishment?

We have no better Rule to judge of God's designs and intentions by, than, by enquiring into the natures of things, to see what ends and uses he has fitted them for. And, tho' I do not say that God must necessarily make that use of things, which men are pleas'd to suppose, from the consideration of their frame, and seeming tendency of their nature, he design'd them for (for Men may easily be mistaken, and are at best but very imperfect Judges of God's designs) yet I do say, and in this I have the consent of the wisest Men in all Ages of the World, that, where it is very plain, from the natures of things, that they are extreemly well fitted to answer this or that end, and where the end it self is worthy of God, (as no body can deny that end to be for which we are now arguing from the nature of man) this is a strong presumptive Argument, that the Divine Wisdom design'd them for it.

Much more, if the end be, not only worthy of God, but nearly for his honour, tending to very noble and illustrious purposes, to display the glories of his Attributes, to vindicate his Authority, to give a sufficient sanction to his Laws, and to promote the true good and happiness of his Creatures; in such a case it seems to be not only unreasonable, but even a kind of Sacrilege, to rob God of the honour of having design'd so great and glorious an end. And that this is the case of the end now before us, for which God, by the frame of Man, has evidently fitted him, as it may appear in part, from what has been already said of the usefulness of the belief of future

Punishments, for preserving the peace and good order of the World, so will it farther appear from considering.

Secondly, *That it is very much for God's honour, and agreeable to our best notions of him and his Divine Attributes, to believe that he will punish sinners: nay farther, that we know not how to reconcile our notions of him, and his Divine Attributes, to a belief that he will not punish them.*

That it is an honourable thing, and becoming God, to punish Sinners, can be doubted by none, who have any true sense of what sin is, how heinous an affront towards God, how impudent a flying in the face of him? For what less does the sinner in effect say, when he wilfully persists in a constant course of transgressing God's Laws, against his most express and often repeated warnings to the contrary, than that he doth not like them, that he thinks he can make better for himself, that he doth not desire to be like God, but rather the contrary, that he doth not fear him, and that he will not have him to reign over him? And shall not God visit for these Things? shall he not avenge himself on such Enemies as these? Can we think it consistent with his honour, not to chastise this bold ingratitude, this bold Rebellion, these insolent taunts and vilings, these daring defiance, of his own Creatures? What doth he appear so truly awful and terrible, so truly himself, Lord of Heaven and Earth, Infinite in Majesty and Power, when he scattereth the wicked in the imagination of their hearts, and makes all that hate him flee before him? And what reason can we possibly then have to fancy, that God will not appear like himself, that he will not do that, which is so highly his Honour and Glory to be done?

Do not all God's Attributes conspire together to prove that he will punish Sinners? What more reasonable to conceive than, that a God of Infinite knowledge, power and goodness should employ these, in observing and governing the world of his own hands? than that a God of Infinite purity and holiness should, according to the utmost of his power, encourage Virtue, and discourage Vice, in all those his Creatures which he has made capable of them: and that, for this purpose, should give them a sufficient assurance of rewards and punishments, which are motives fit to influence, and yet will not compel, rational and free Agents? Than that a God of Infinite wisdom, having created a Race of Beings, capable of contributing to his glory and each others good, in a very high

gree, should not suffer these noble ends to be defeated, for want of a discreet Sanction of rewards and punishments, which he could not but foresee would alone be sufficient to engage Men, to use their powers and capacities aright for the attainment of these ends? Or *Lastly*, than that a God of Infinite Justice and Majesty, should not suffer his Laws to be trampled under foot, the ends of his Creation to be perverted, his Authority to be condemn'd, and his Honour vilify'd; without vindicating himself, and severely animadverting upon all such as should dare thus to neglect him, much more contemn and rebel against him? All this is easy and natural, and our minds meet with no manner of difficulty, in the conception and belief of it.

But the difficulty lyes all on the other side, how to reconcile the contrary of all this to our notions of God and his Divine Attributes. How to persuade our selves, that a God of Infinite Knowledge, Power and Goodness, should neither mind nor care what becomes of his own Creatures. That a God of infinity Purity and Holiness, should be indifferent whither Vice or Virtue thrives and prospers, and do nothing to encourage the one or discourage the other. That a God of Infinite Wisdom should lay great and noble designs, and yet not make sufficient provision, for the bringing them to effect. And *Lastly*, that a God of Infinite Justice and Majesty, should not deal to Men, according to their works, but should let his own Laws be broken, the foundations of the earth be put out of course, wickedness and Cruelty, rapine, and violence, confusion and every evil work go on and prosper, himself be affronted at any rate, his Enemies become triumphant, and yet either not regard, or at least not chastise and regulate these great enormities. These are indeed difficulties, such difficulties as we may safely challenge all the wit of Man to get over, such as we must ever despair of reconciling to our Notions of God and his Attributes. But blessed be God, there is no need of attempting this; since, I hope to prove effectually.

Lastly, God doth very singularly and remarkably punish some sinners: and hence it may be reasonably inferr'd that he designs to punish all.

How little soever Men may be apt to take notice of God's ordinary Punishments of Sinners, such as those before mention'd, which he has interwoven in the very nature of sin, and which, duly consider'd, would appear to be as surely his, as any others: yet he is pleas'd sometimes to make bare his Arm, in so vi-

fible a manner, and so immediately and conspicuously to chastise Sinners himself: that one would think it impossible, for the most wilful and obstinate Unbeliever to forbear making the Psalmist's inference, on behalf of the Wicked, which he makes on behalf of the Rigteous, *Verily there is a reward for the Wicked, doubtless there is a God that judgeth in the Earth.*

Thus, for instance: sometimes God has been pleas'd to send his Angels, visibly to smite Sinners; several examples of which we have in Sacred History, as in the case of *Balaam*, Numb. 22. 31. of *David* and his People, 2 Sam. 24. 17. and particularly of *Herod*, at the time of his receiving Divine honour from his Flatterers, Acts 12. 23. At other times, God has thought fit by Dreams, and Visions and Apparitions, to discover several Crimes, which had perhaps for many years laid hid, more especially murders, and to bring to light the Authors of them, and set them before Human Tribunals, and there make the punishments, which they thought themselves securely screen'd from overtake them. (And of this we have so many well attested and unexceptionable instances in this Nation, that it is impossible for Men to doubt of them, unless they are resolv'd to doubt of every thing, that depends upon human Testimony. And this is but a very poor excuse to say, that so many relations of this kind are false, that we know not what to believe: for we know very well, and Act accordingly in all other cases, that we are always to believe in proportion to our evidence; and that the want of evidence in one instances, doth not necessarily prove the want of it in another.) And lastly, when God doth not thus supernaturally show himself, yet there is often so much exquisite wisdom and Justice to be seen, in the punishments of Sinners, either as to the manner, or the timing of them (paying and requiting then, in their own kind, nay, those very things which they have done to others: pulling down upon their own heads that very mischief which they had designed for others: balking their Plots and Contrivances, in the very critical moment, and nipping them, if we may so speak, in the very top and glory of their wickedness: as in the case of *Herod* before mention'd, who, at the very moment of his being honour'd as God, was, by the immediate infliction of a most noisom and foul disease, effectually shewn to be but a Man, so that we cannot with the least colour of reason, ascribe these to chance; which is incapable of acting either wisely or Justly but must in all reason ascribe them to a just and wise Providence.

dence, which ordereth all things with infinite wisdom and justice, and say with the Psalmist: *Hereby shall men know that this is thy hand, and that thou Lord hast done it.*

This I think abundantly enough to make good the first part of my present Argument, viz. that God doth very signally and remarkably punish some Sinners. As to the latter part, the Inference from hence, that God doth design to punish all, sure nothing can be more reasonable than this is. The great difficulty lies in proving that God does observe and design to punish, or does actually punish, Sinners at all. This being once granted, there can be no reason given why God, if he punish some, should not punish all. Are they not all alike punishable Creatures? Doth not God abhor and detest Sin alike in all persons? Do not all Sinners break his Laws, defy his Authority, affront his Sovereignty, disparage his Wisdom, provoke his Vengeance? And what shadow of reason than can we possibly have to conceit, that God will punish some Sinners, and not all?

I know but one thing that can be said, with the least appearance of Reason, in this case; and that is, that it is sufficient, in order to the good Government of the World, and to keep Mankind generally in awe, that some few Examples should be now and then made; but this certainly is not true. It is the belief that all Sinners shall be punish'd either here or hereafter, that chiefly keeps Men in tolerable order and subjection: take but this away, and Men will soon run the risque of their being of the number of those few, that God usually lays his hand upon in this World. Join'd with this belief indeed it may be sufficient, for the Government of the World, that God should punish but some Sinners in this World, and may be a very good reason why he doth not punish more than he doth in it; but without it, it cannot. Besides this reason, so far as it is good, holds only as to this World, but can be no reason why God should not punish all Sinners in the next.

This then I take for granted, that all Sinners will certainly be punish'd, at one time or other, either here or hereafter; and, if punish'd at all, there can be no doubt but they will be punish'd, in proportion to their demerits: this being no more, than agreeable to the Laws of Justice and Equity. And shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right? Or can we think that he, who doth every thing else in weight and measure, will not do this so, in which his own honour, and the Interests of Piety and virtue, are so deeply concern'd?

I do not say that God must punish Sinners, *in full proportion to their demerits*: it seems to be too much presumption in us especially in such a case as this, which must be allow'd to depend very much upon God's arbitrary Will and Pleasure, to say what God must do. But, since it is undeniably plain that God may justly thus punish Sinners, if he so pleases: I think it very great presumption, on the other hand, to suppose that he will not, without some good and substantial ground for such a supposition. I know Men will be very apt to plead Gods mercy, as a ground for this supposition: but alas! if we consider God's justice as well as his mercy, and withal that this World is the proper scene of God's mercy, as the other is of his Justice: and moreover add to this, that every Sinner will have had an abundant measure of mercy from God in this Life, and that the abuse of this Mercy is it self one very good reason for God's punishing Sinners with rigorous Justice: I fear Sinners will find but little comfort in this plea. Neither will I take upon me exactly to determine, how great the demerits of Sinners are, and consequently how great their punishments will be. I shall only say that they are undoubtedly very great, as every Man must needs be sensible who considers of how heinous, and offensive and provoking a nature to God sin is; and that the greatest punishments, that have ever been inflicted upon Sinners in this World, cannot reasonably be suppos'd to have been adequate to the guilt and merit of their sins. And this brings me to shew.

Secondly, *That God does not punish all Sinners, and that too in proportion to their demerits, in this Life.* It has been an ancient complaint, both of *Jews* and *Heathens*, that many Sinners hardly meet with any punishment at all in this World: nay, on the contrary, that their outward condition here is often thriving and prosperous, that they may seem rather to be rewarded than punish'd. *They are not in trouble as other Men, neither are they plagu'd like other Men. Their eyes stand out with fullness, they have more than heart could wish. Ps. 37. They become old, yea are mighty in power. Their seed is establish'd in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them. Job 21. 8.* And our own experience will easily confirm this to us, by plenty of instances.

And as for those Sinners, whom God doth punish here, yet how little proportion do their punishments bear to the merit

of their sins? Excepting the *inward anguish, fretting, vexation and torment*, that sin is naturally apt to beget in the minds of Sinners) and even this they have many ways of stupifying and lulling asleep in great measure : and besides the very sting of this is the apprehension and expectation of future punishments) Excepting this I say, what Affliction is there, that befalls wicked Men, by way of punishment in this Life, that doth not equally befall good Men, either in the very same or an equivalent kind, by way of tryal of their Dutifulness and Obedience. I believe we shall be hard put to't to match any wicked Man, with upright *Job*, as to outward Calamities. And can we then possibly think those Afflictions to be sufficient for the punishment of Sinners, which, or greater, they themselves perhaps, had they been good Men, must have endur'd, for proving of their virtues, 'Tis true indeed these punishment of wicked Men are sufficient for the ends, for which God designs them at present, to awaken, and frighten, and warn Sinners, to forsake their sins, and to return to him : but they are by no means sufficient, for a total and *adequate* punishment of sin.

Nay, tho' we should take the greatest and most severe punishments, that God has ever inflicted upon Sinners in this World, as for instance the *burning of Sodom and Gomorrah by fire and brimstone* ; yet what is there in all this, that can be thought to come up to the demerits of a sinful course of life : or which has not happen'd, in as full measure, to good Men, in the very same or like Instances? What manner of proportion is there between a few hours torment, tho' never so exquisite, and a continu'd course of Rebellion against God, for many years : and that too attended with the most heinous and aggravating Circumstances, that can possibly be conceiv'd? What more is there in this, if so much, than has been in the Sufferings of many Martyrs for Religion, who have endur'd fiery tryals, made full as sharp, and propably much longer, than this was?

It is plain then that it is so far from being true that God doth punish all Sinners, and that too *in proportion to their demerits*, in this life : that the contrary is most evident, that some Sinners are hardly punig'd at all, the greatest part but slightly, and none hear so much, as their sins deserve. And this makes the way clear for my Inference, in the

Third and last place : viz. That therefore God will certainly punish Sinners in the next Life.

This being a just and regular Conclusion, drawn from my two foregoing Propositions, cannot possibly be false, if they are true, as I hope I have sufficiently prov'd them to be. And therefore, I think, there is nothing left for me more to do: unless it be to represent to you, in few words, the full force of this whole Argument, and so leave it to your serious Consideration.

I have endeavour'd to shew, from the nature of Man whom God has made a punishable Creature: from the nature of God, whose Divine Attributes do mightily countenance and encourage a belief that he will punish Sinners, and seem to be utterly irreconcilable to a contrary perswasion: and Lastly, from those actual punishments, which God doth remarkably inflict upon some Sinners in this Life, that God will certainly punish all Sinners, and that too *in proportion to their demerits*, either in this Life or the next.

And yet, That God doth not thus punish all Sinners in this Life, I have made plain both from our own, and our *Forefathers* experience, which jointly bear Testimony that many Sinners are hardly punish'd here at all: and that of those, who are acknowledg'd to be punish'd, most are punish'd vastly beneath the demerits of their sins, and none in any near proportion to them.

And what now is the true Inference from all this: but that God has reserv'd some other time, some other place, that is the next Life, in which these things shall be more equally adjusted, God's honour be fully vindicated, and the measure of his enemies punishments fill'd up.

Give me leave only to apply what has been said in this, and my foregoing discourse: and I have done. And

First, Since there is so very much to be said, from Nature and reason, for the certainty of *Hell-Torments*; it cannot possibly be any objection against the Christian Religion, that it requires the belief of them. On the contrary, this is a very good Argument on the side of Christianity; and thus far all Men are prepar'd, by their own Nature and Reason, to become Christians. An this is what the Christian Apo'logists often tell the *Heathens*, that, as to the belief of a *future state of rewards and punishments*, their Faith was before hand with us in this point: and that the books of their learned Men were full of it.

For shame then let not us Christians shew any unwillingness to believe that, which, even tho' we never had heard of Chri-

stianity,

Christianity, we should have had *good ground and reason* to have believed. Let us not, now that we have much clearer evidence than the *Heathens* had, be more hard to believe, or believe more faintly, even than they did. But, on the contrary, let us believe most firmly and unfeignedly, what our Nature, Reason and Divine Revelation, so clearly and harmoniously teach us: and heartily bless God, that the main things, which he has call'd us, by Divine Revelation, to the belief of, are so agreeable to our Natures, so easy to our Understandings, so unanimously recommended to us by the general Tradition and Consent of the wisest and best Men of all Ages and Nations, and attended with such ample Credentials from our own Consciences.

Secondly, If there be really such good ground from Nature and Reason, for the belief of *Hell-Torments*, as I have prov'd there is; then it is undeniably plain, that our great Pretenders to Nature and Reason are nothing less than what they pretend to be. Nothing, you see, can have a clearer foundation, both in Nature and Reason than this: and yet nothing is so little believed, among these Men as this. Where then is their respect to Nature and Reason? Even just there, where it always useth to be, in their pretences and vain boastings, but no where else. The truth on't is, these Men are ashamed to renounce Christianity bare facedly, which is the Religion in fashion, and which I can easily believe to be not very agreeable to them, without offering some sort of an excuse for so doing; and therefore they make aloud out-cry of Nature and Reason, and endeavour to misrepresent them and Christianity, as at variance with each other; whereas they are indeed, as appears from the instance which we have been threatening of, the most friendly things in the World, and in every thing help to countenance and confirm each other.

Let us then as Men, much more as Christians, beware of being deceiv'd and led aside by these Mens pretensions, and of thinking the worse of Christianity for what they have the impudence to say of it. And not only so, but let us all, in our several Stations, use our utmost endeavours, to expose the baseness and dishonesty of these Mens designs, and to hinder the propagation of their pernicious and hypocritical Principles, which under a false guise and shew of Reason, aim at the utter extirpation and destruction of it.

Thirdly, Supposing that from what has been said to prove the certainty of *Hell-Torments*, we have prov'd only the probability

bility of them, nay or even shewn that there can be no certainty that they will not be: yet even hence it will evidently appear, what prodigious folly, what unaccountable madness those Men are guilty of, who venture to scoff at and ridicule the belief of them. Nothing less than an absolute and infallible demonstration, that there will be no such thing, can possibly warrant this practise, and it is against all Rules of prudence, to run any the least, hazard in such a case as this, where if there be any hazard at all, it must needs be very considerable and important.

For certainly, if there be such a place as Hell, in another World, (and we are strangely constituted Creatures if there be not) the very hottest part of it will be the portion of those Men, who endeavour, by all imaginable Tricks and Artifices to draw Men off from the belief of it: and, by so doing, defeat God's wise and gracious Ends in his threatnings of it, the security of his own honour, and of his Creatures happiness: pull down the strong holds of Religion, for such above all are the fears and belief of *Hell-Torments*: and betray their Brethren Body and Soul, into everlasting ruin and perdition. Certainly a Man had need be very wary, and tread very surely, when the consequence of his mistaking, or treading awry, will be less than the hottest place in Hell it self.

Fourthly, If there be an Hell for the Ungodly in another Life, then we can have little reason to envey or repine at the prosperity in this, or to murmur against and accuse God, upon account of it. But of this more in my following Discourse.

Lastly, From all that has been said we cannot but plainly see the great folly and danger of leading a wicked Life, which is sure to end inexpressible woe and bitterness. It is great wisdom in all cases, to keep our eyes fix'd upon the final issue and event of things, and to consider what will become of us *in the end thereof*: but in no case can this possibly be more reasonable, than in the case before us, where our all is at stake and the issue must be nothing less than the extreme happiness or misery of our whole beings, Souls and Bodies, for ever and ever. Can we be too careful, can we possibly act too securely in such a case?

It will be no small comfort to us to live free from the anxious and tormenting Fears and Apprehensions of being tortured and going the punishments of our sins, in another Life. And there not near so much certainty, as there is, of future punishments, yet it would be great wisdom, and it would make

very easy in this World, to take care to live so, that we shall be in no manner of danger of being hurt by them, if they should be. And, as to another Life, if there should be no such thing, yet the very worst that can happen to us, will be no more than what must happen to the wicked too, which is to cease to be for ever: nay, according to the Hypothesis of some, who believe future rewards for the good, tho' they deny future punishments for the wicked, we may be exceeding happy in the next World, when the wicked shall not be at all, and our care to avoid Hell, tho' there should be no such thing, may be rewarded with Heaven. So that upon all accounts, it is our manifest interest to live so, as that we may have no reason to be afraid of Hell: this immediate benefit we shall reap from so doing, that, while, even in this World, *there is no peace to the wicked, but they are like the troubled Sea; which cannot rest, whose waters are continually casting up mire and filth: we shall be all calm within, void of any the least fear, and full of quietness and assurance for ever; and, if our own Natures and Reason are not made to deceive us, we shall hereafter find, to our unspeakable comfort, all our pains to avoid Hell, turn to rich account, and become an occasion of everlasting Joy, Comfort, Satisfaction, Exultation and Triumph to us.*

Wherefore, to conclude all in the words of honest Socrates, *Let us, knowing these things to be so, use our utmost endeavours to present our selves, pure and spotless, before our Judge; [Plato. Gorgias.]* words, tho' proceeding from an Heathen, not much unlike those of an inspir'd Writer, 2 Pet. 13. 14, 17. *Seeing that ye are for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of your Judge in peace, without spot and blameless: and beware lest ye being led away, with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness,*

The Greatness of Hell-Torments.

S E R M O N I V.

MATTH. 25. 41.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

HAVING, in my former Discourses upon these words, shew'd what I propounded first to treat of from the *viz.* the *Certainty of Hell-Torments*, from Principles of Nature and Reason; I shall now proceed, according to the method which I set my self, to consider the Greatness of them, and, in so doing,

First, To shew that they will certainly be inconceivably great; and

Secondly, To enquire, as far as we are able, wherein the greatness of them will consist.

And, forasmuch as, in my former Discourses, I have far gratify'd some Men, as, chiefly for their sakes, to argue only from Principles of Nature and Reason, for the proof of that, which is the main point in dispute between us, *viz.* the *Certainty of Hell-Torments* (tho' still with this caution, that the fullest and clearest proof of this matter must be had from Holy Scriptures) I shall now be less solicitous about gratifying them as to what follows, and shall freely argue from Revelation, as well as Nature and Reason, and tho' I shall not neglect or pass over proofs from these, yet I shall no longer confine myself wholly to them.

First then, I am to shew that the *Torments of Hell* will certainly be inconceivably great. And this is so plain a truth, that the very *Heathens* themselves, by the meer light of Nature, seem to have been perfectly well assur'd of it. For not only their *Poets*, whose heated fancies and imaginations

perhaps be suppos'd to have carry'd them a great deal to farther upon this subject (tho' even these in my Opinion, are not wholly to be slighted in this case, because *Poets*, especially good ones, always write with some regard to the Sentiments of the Age, in which they live) but also their best and gravest Philosophers, do both expressly assert the extremity and intolerableness of *Hell Torments*, and likewise give us such terrifying and amazing descriptions of them, as may abundantly convince us, that they did really believe them to be infinitely great, infinitely beyond all that they were able to express. A small taste of which you may be pleas'd to tak in *Plato* only, (a) who, under the person of one who is suppos'd to have seen *Hell*, and afterwards to have return'd to this World again, tells us what dreadful spectacles he there saw: how he beheld Men tortur'd, with numberless Tortures of all sorts; some burning in Rivers of fire, others shivering and freezing in streams of excessive coldness, some toss'd about and torn by wild Beasts, others incessantly burnt with the lamps of the Furies, and more particularly some (and certainly we can hardly think of any thing more terrible to sense) bound hand and foot, than slay'd and thrown upon thorns and prickles, to be tortur'd.

And indeed it is no great wonder that they should judge so right in this matter: because the reason of the thing it self must needs make it very evident, to every one that impartially considers it. For, whether we reflect upon the heinous and odious nature of sin, and its direct opposition to our own Reason and the Divine nature and will: or upon the infinity Majesty of that God, who is affronted by our sins: or lastly, upon those infinite obligations to God, which Men break through their sins; we must necessarily acknowledge the circumstance on all hands to be so very inexcusable, aggravating and provoking, that the Divine Vengeance has all the reason, that can possibly be imagin'd, to inflict the most severe and dreadful punishments upon Sinners.

And according we find by experience it has always done. The rebellious Angels immediately felt God's vengeful arm, on their Rebellion, and were soon tumbled down headlong, from their bright seats of everlasting bliss and glory, to the dark Regions of eternal horror, woe and misery; and

(a) *Platon. Phædo, Gorgias, Axiochus, Leg. l. 10.*

the very first sin of Man was punish'd, with the loss of Immortality, the Divine Presence, and all the conveniencies and delights of *Paradise*: and not only so, but with the curse of continual labour, pain, and sorrow all the while that he should live, and in the end, with death it self. Afterwards, an universal *Deluge* swept away the whole World, excepting only eight persons for their sins; and, for the same cause, the Lord rain'd down fire and brimstone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrath*, and destroy'd them. And, to name but one more instance, the very beloved People of God the *Jews*, for their sin in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of Life, were persecuted with such a long and dreadful train of Woes and Miseries, at the destruction of *Jerusalem*, as it would make your very hearts bleed only to hear repeated. So careful has God been in all Ages, to manifest his high dislike of, and indignation against Sin, and the severity of those Judgments, with which it shall be punish'd. And then, as St. Peter argues, *if God spared not the Angels that sin'd* (a Race of much higher and nobler Beings than we are) *but cast them down to Hell, and deliver'd them into chains of darkness, to be reserv'd unto Judgment*; and brought a Sentence of misery and death upon all Mankind, for the sins of their first Parents; and spar'd not the old World, bringing in the flood upon the World of the ungodly; and turning the Cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorrath* into ashes, condemn'd them with an overthrow. 2 Pet. 2. 4, 5, 6, 9. And pour'd out the vials of his wrath upon his People the *Jews*, in the most terrible and astonishing manner imaginable; then let us be assur'd, that he knoweth how To reserve the unjust, unto the day of Judgment to be punish'd.

Farther, we have most of us seen or heard of in others, and I fear many of us felt within our selves, some Specimens as it were, of *Hell-Torments*, even this World: when God has been pleas'd to let loose the Consciences of Sinners upon them, and to lay open the prospect of their future State before their Eyes. But, Lord! who can be able to express the terrors, that such Men are then in? Who, that has seen them, can reflect upon them, without the utmost horror? Who, that has felt them, can think any thing worthy the name of pain after them? Oh the uneasiness, the restlessness, the agonies, the racks, the tortures of a wounded Spirit! Oh the doleful symptoms, the dire effects, the sullenness, the tremblings, the blood sweats of Despair. Blessed God! Who can conceive the greatness of those Torments, which have such terrible effects.

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Who shall be able to endure those Torments, which few, very few, have courage enough so much as to think on? Oh! how would it have affected the most obstinate and and obdurate heart among us, to have seen the unhappy Spira, weltring upon his bed, as if it had been upon a bed of flames: seeking rest, but finding none: nay, not so much as hoping for it, while he sought it; and to have beheld the fierceness of those Torments, which in spite of all Attempts to comfort and relieve him, meerly his own guilty mind, and the fears of Hell only continually lash'd and scourg'd him with.

And yet alas! these foretast of Hell, and all other even the severest Judgment of God against Sinners in this World, are but very faint and feeble representations, but mere dawningings and glimpses, of that wrath which shall be reveal'd in the next. *That, That* is the place which God has reserv'd for the more *signal and consummate* punishment of Sinner; There all Circumstances shall combine together, for the aggravation of their miseries: and all those reasons shall their cease, which have, in great measure, ty'd up the hands of Divine vengeance in this World. There all the doubts of the wicked will be too plainly resolv'd: their infidelity turn'd into a faith, which will make them tremble: and those small hopes, which they once had, into pure and unmix'd despair. There will be no sleep, no friends, no diversion, to gain them now and then a short respite from their miseries, as in this life. Lastly, There the Righteous and the Unrighteous shall be perfectly separated, and there shall no longer be any danger of destroying the innocent with the wicked: there the season for Sinners repentance will be at an end, and consequently all long suffering and patience, upon that account, at an end too: and, for the same reason, there the prayers of good Men, on behalf of the wicked, shall cease, and God shall be no longer importun'd and with held by them, from giving his avenging arm its full scope. And what then is to be expected, but that God's *whole displeasure shall arise*: that he shall whet his sword, and give it a keener Edge, and make it fall yet seven time heavier upon his Enemies, than it had e're before been wont to do? What indeed is to be then expected, but that a new, and infinitely more terrible Scene of dread and horror shall appear, an exquisite and perfect State of suffering begin?

And then it is no wonder that we find the Holy Spirit, every where in Scripture, speaking in such dreadful terms of Hell-

Torments, and representing them always by those things, which are most terrible to sense. As, that they shall cause weeping and wailling and *gnashing of teeth*: tribulation and anguish trembling and *wo*, Matt. 8. 12. 13. 42. Rom. 2. 9. and all the dismal Symptoms of the most intense and fiercest *Torments*: that no mau Man can dwell with them: *Isa. 33. 14.* that we should make but a monstrous silly Bargain, tho', even for the gain of the whole World, Matt. 16. 26. we should sell our souls to them: that they were prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels, Matt. 25. 41. those most impudent and outrageous Offenders, and consequently thos. most unhappy objects of God's hottest wrath; that they are set forth to us under the name of fire, a devouring fire, fire that never shall be quenck'd, fire everlasting: by fire and brimstone, by a lake of fire and brimstone, by a worm that dyeth not, &c. Mar. 9. 43. Rev. 14. 10. 19. 20. Mar. 9. 44. 46. 48. From all which it is plain, as also from the exact proportion that will certainly be, between the rewards and punishments of another Life, that we may fairly apply those Words, which were spoken by St. Paul, or the Joys of Heaven, to the Torments of Hell: that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of Man, 1 Cor. 2. 9. those dreadful things, which God hath prepar'd for them that hate him. But this will appear still more clearly, from enquiring.

Secondly, *As far as we are able, wherein the greatness of Hell Torments will consist.* I say, as far as we are able: because we are as yet very much in the dark, as to the particulars of our future State. However, as far as the Scriptures and plain Reason will bear me out in this matter, I am sure I may safely venture: and I hope I shall take sufficient care to venture no farther. I know very well that this is a Subject, upon which good Men have been very apt to give a great deal too much scope to their fancies: as St. Basil for instance, who fancy'd that at the general Conflagration of the World, [Basilin Ps. 28] there will be a Separation of the purer and more refin'd and noble parts of all the Elements, from the grosser and more ignoble: that the former shall all ascend to and continue about Heaven, to minister to the glory and felicity of the Saints; but the latter be cast down to Hell, for the punishment of the damn'd; that so, as every Creature should be matter of Joy and comfort to the Blessed, soon the contrary, every Creature should help to aggravate the Torments of the damn'd; and

they, who had forsaken God who is but one, to follow the Creatures, who are many, might have a manifold Punishment, manifold Tormentors. And these fancies, how groundless soever, yet carrying an appearance of religious zeal along with them, are apt to take too much, and to make too deep an impression on the belief of a great many honest-minded Christians. And, tho' there be no great harm in them to Men, who consider them only as fancies and private opinions, yet, seeing that many Christians are injudicious, and often lay too great stress upon such fancies, it is best certainly not to indulge our selves in them, in discourses upon this Subject; but to keep close to Reason and Scripture, as I shall endeavour to do, in what follows. Now our Reason and Scripture make the greatness of Hell-torments to consist in these particulars,

First, In the Wicked's being banish'd from the enjoyment of God, and all that *fulness of Joy*, and *those Rivers of Pleasure*, which are *in his presence*, and *at his right hand*, for evermore: and in all the miseries naturally consequent upon such their banishment.

Secondly, In the lashes of their own guilty Minds, and of all those vexatious Lusts and Passions, which they shall carry with them into another World, and which will be mightily heighten'd and inflam'd there,

Thirdly, In the loathsomeness and uncomfortableness of the place of Hell, and the troublesome Conversion of the Devil and wicked Spirits, which they shall be there confin'd to.

Fourthly, In the pains occasion'd by the Fire of Hell, or whatever is meant under that name. And

Lastly, In the uninterrupted continuance, and eternal duration, of every one of these.

First, in the Wicked's being banish'd from the enjoyment of God, and all that *fulness of Joy*, and *those Rivers of Pleasure*, which are *in his presence*, and *at his right hand*, for evermore: and in all the miseries naturally consequent upon such their banishment. For so runs the former part of that dreadful sentence, which shall be pronounc'd against the wicked, at the Day of Judgment, *Depart from me, ye cursed*. Not that the wicked shall so depart from God, as never to see or remember him any more, and to loose all knowledge of Him and Heaven for ever: No, this, as said a punishment as it is, could be but a very light one, in comparison of that, which they

they shall then be doom'd to. They shall see God, or, which is the same thing, have a most quick and lively notion of him; but without hopes of ever being reconcil'd to him; They shall see Heaven, or at least have always a fresh remembrance of that glorious sight which they had of it, at the general Judgment: but still, as the Rich Man in the Gospel did Paradise with an impassible gulph betwixt it and them.

But oh my Soul! How canst thou ever sufficiently conceive the dreadfulnes of such a departure from God, as this is. How canst thou even in any tolerable measure, know what thou shalt loose, in loosing that Infinity Abiss of Happiness. How canst thou bear the Thoughts of existing, so much as one moment, when thou shalt be frown'd upon by him, whose favour alone, is life, that is, every thing which makes Life desirable? Oh! How wilt thou be able to endure thyself: when thy Father, thy most tender and compassionate Father: thy Saviour, thy most loving and relenting Saviour: the Holy Angels and just Men made perfect, those benatur'd of Created beings: when the *God of all comfort, and giver of every good gift*: when he, who once lov'd thee so well as to *lay down his life for thee*: when they, who have made their constant business to minister to thee, and have rejoiced without measure, when they have seen the least hopes of thee becoming happy; in one word, when all those beings who are good, and continually delight in doing good, and from whom alone all good must come, shall not endure thee, shall detest and abhor thee, shall spurn thee from their presence, shall *laugh at thy calamity, and mock when thy fear cometh*? God! how will it vex and fret our Souls, to reflect upon those bright and glorious Mansions of happiness, from which we shall be then banish'd? How will the Contemplation even of Heaven itself torment us, when it shall serve only to create in us strong and eager desires and longings after it, which must never be satisfy'd, and to remind us of a loss, which is Infinite as God himself? But, above all, how will it gall and wound our Souls, how will it make us all rage and fury against our selves, to consider, that we have lost all this thro' our own fault: and that, when we had it all within our reach and our power, we were contented (foolish Creatures that we were!) for meer gawds and trifles, meer shadows and appearances of happiness, to part with it? Certainly, were there no other punishment for the wicked in Hell, than this, the

which would have great reason to lay of it, as Cain did of his, *it is greater than we can bear*. But

Secondly, There will be likewise the lashes of their own guilty minds, and of all those vexatious Lufts and Passions, which they shall carry with them into another World, and which will be mightily heighen'd and inflam'd there. By the worm of the wicked, which shall never dye, so often mention'd in Scripture as what is to be part of their Punishment in Hell, we are doubtless to understand the remorse of their own guilty minds or Consciences, which shall, as it were, gnaw and prey upon them, and give them much greater pain and torment, than a worm preying upon their living flesh would do. Their Consciences, I say, which will there be continually and most sensibly reproaching them, not only with the loss of Heaven (tho' this will be reproach enough) but with all that baseness ingratitude, unreasonableness, folly and sinfulness towards God, which they shall have been guilty of, in their past Lives: and with all that shame, anguish, horror, inconceivable and endless Misery, which they shall thereby have brought upon their own Heads. And, as we are sure, from the nature of the thing it self, that, when the wicked shall no longer be cloth'd with such bodies of flesh, as they now are, which mightily obstruct and press down the Soul in her operations, but shall put on spiritual bodies, bodies in which their Souls may freely and uncontrollably exert their utmost powers, their apprehensions and resentments of things most necessarily come vastly more quick and vigorous, and consequently their sense of their own folly, guilt and misery, and their remorse, anguish and trouble for them, exceeding more keen and poignant than they had ever been in this World. So have we all the reason that can be to believe, that the Divine Vengeance will both add new stings to those their own inbred Tormentors and (as I have before proved to you, it sometimes does with the wounded spirits of Sinners, even in this World) whet and sharpen, in a super natural manner, the points of their old ones. So that, whereas in this World their Consciences did only chastise them with whips, they shall there chastise them with Scorpions.

Besides this, some Divines have been of opinion that wicked Men shall carry their appetites and lustings after sensual pleasures, into Hell along with them: and there, to their unpeakable Torment, continually burn with the most raging

And vehement desires and longings after these things, which yet at the same time they shall be infallibly assur'd, it shall never in the least be in their power to enjoy. But, this seeming not very agreeable to the notion of those spiritual Bodies which the wicked shall be clothed within a future State, shall not insist upon it; but only suppose, what I think very probable, that the wicked shall retain in Hell a remembrance *Luke 16. 25.* of those pleasures which they once enjoyed, in this World, in their Bodies of flesh, and that this remembrance shall be extremely grateful and pleasing to them, and put them upon wishing most earnestly that they were again to be clothed with such Bodies, again to act over the same pleasures, which having long accusom'd themselves to, the full bent and inclination of their Souls has been long wholly set toward them, and has made them utterly incapable of relishing or delighting in any other. And, if there shall be any such eager longings and hankerings after bodies of flesh, and the pleasures belonging to them: these join'd with an utter despair of ever obtaining what they so much long for, must needs be an unsupportable Torment to the damn'd.

But, be this as it will, it is certain both from Reason and Scripture, that the wicked shall be subject to all those peevish and unasy Passions in Hell, which are purely Spiritual: *Pride, Envy, Malice, Anger, Hatred, Fear, Self-Revenge, &c.* and moreover shall have all these in a much higher degree there, much more troublesome and vexatious to them, than they are where in this World. All these we find ascrib'd to the Devil and his Angels, spiritual Beings, in Scripture: and indeed it is inconceivable to Reason, how wicked Souls can exist without them; and these being pure spiritual Passions, or Passions of the mind consider'd abstractedly from the body, must needs grow and increase, as we become more and more spiritualiz'd. Besides, that the objects of these vexatious passions will be infinitely enlarg'd to the Damn'd in Hell, and that they will there meet with the most provoking occasions of raising and inflaming their passions to the utmost, and yet at the same time with the most tormenting balks and and disappointments to them, that can possibly be imagin'd. Did the envious Man grow big and swell with Envy here, at the sight of the earthly prosperity of his Brethren? He will even burst with there, at the Contemplation of the happiness of the Saints in Heaven. D'd the Malicious Man, hate and malign those

who never did him much hurt here? Oh how will he rage and flame out with hatred and ill-will against all those malicious Beings, his Companions in Hell, who shall continually be doing him all the mischief that they are able there? Did not the proud man know how to brook any, even the smallest, disappointments here? Alas! he shall meet with nothing else but disappointments, and those too, of the highest kind, there; there, I say, where he shall be sure of having every such thing as he would not, and no one such thing as he would. Was the angry Man apt to be soon put into a passion here, by little Crosses and Vexations? He will there be continually heated, fired, nay, even made and kept red-hot, by a constant series of great ones. To say all at once, the fears of the wicked shall be there heighten'd into despair, their displeasure against themselves into the utmost indignation; and the most exasperated Rage, fretfulness and bitterness of Soul, the most unmix'd Sorrow, irksomeness and self abhorrency, the keenest Anger and Revenge, shall be the *portion of their Cup*. So that indeed wicked men seem to carry compleat Misery, into Hell along with them, while they carry such appetites as, tho' never so eager and craving, cannot in the least there be satisfied: such passions, tho' never so vexatious and intolerable, cannot in the least be pacify'd and allay'd there. And yet this Misery will still be enhanc'd.

Thirdly, By the loathsomeness and uncomfortableness of the place of Hell, and the troublesome conversation of the Devil and wicked spirits, which the dam'd shall be there confin'd. Wherever the place of Hell shall be, which as St. Gregory saith, *I dare not rashly determine*, and as St. Augustin, *I believe no man knows but him, to whom the Divine Spirit has particularly revealed it*; wherever it shall be (whither in the Center of the Earth, as some have thought: or upon this very Earth, upon which we now live, and which will have been the scene of the Villanies of the wicked, as others: or lastly in a space beyond and without this world (as some have fancy'd from that text of Job 18. 18. *That the wicked shall be chas'd out of the World*) there can be no doubt but it will be very dismal; agreeable to the company and business which it is design'd for. And the Scriptures have said enough of it, styling it *darkness, utter darkness, the blackness of darkness*, (a thing most ungrateful to Human nature) to give us a most loathsome and abominable notion of it. So probably, this darkness shall not be wholly without a mixture

mixture of light: but then it will be a light, even worse than darkness itself, a light which will only help us to see such sad and rueful Spectacles, as will mightily add to our misery, and which we shall heartily wish might be *hid from our eyes for ever*.

Then, as to the company of Hell, we know that this is wholly made up of Devils and wicked Men: and these being a most malicious and ill-natur'd Beings, and besides such, as, we shall then be sensible, have been highly instrumental in drawing us into this *place of Torments*, and moreover, some of these, such, as are to be our *very Tormentors*: the bare sight of them must needs be extremely odious and uneasy to the wicked. And if nothing can be expected from such company, but continual jangling, hatred, anger, snarling and biting at one another, nothing but the most terrible Fears and jealousies of, the most malicious and spiteful bickerings against, each other. Besides good God! if it be thought so very irksome a thing here, to be oblig'd to spend only a few hours in Company that is so disagreeable: how shall we ever be able to bear the thoughts of taking up our dwelling among that Hellish Crew, who spend nothing else, day and night, than how they may be best able to provoke and exasperate each other, to the highest degree possible.

Besides the Damn'd must needs be very gashly and doleful Spectacles to each other: and their perpetual *wreping, wailing, sighing, howling* and loud *out-cries*, occasion'd by their Torments, must needs be very dreadful and effecting. So far will it be, in this case, from being any comfort to us to have Companions in our Misery, that this very thing will be a great addition to our Torments. Oh how sadly shall we read our own Miseries in the malancholy countenances of every one of our Companions! How terrible and killing must the sound of those groans and complaints needs be, which are, as it were, but the faint echoes of our own? What an hideous, what an heart breaking sort of woes, must that be, which comes from an innumerable company of poor unhappy Wretches, labouring under the sharp pangs of a wounded Conscience, and a Mind gall'd and fretted by all the most vexatious Passions, and yet fast burning and scorching in the flames of Hell fire. Which is

Fourth thing, which I propos'd to speak to. And here I must freely confess that I cannot see any manner of reason why we should suppose that the fire of Hell will not be a real and material, but only a metaphorical and figurative fire.

the contrary I think, that the Scriptures constantly expressing it as real, and not so much as in one place, that I know of, departing from this way of expressing it, or favouring any other, or every way of understanding it, is a very good reason why we should believe it so to be. Certainly nothing, if it were purposely being study'd and design'd could serve more effectually to satisfy our Minds in this point, than the Parable of the rich Man in the Gospel; who is there represented as burning in a material Fire, of the Hell, and begging for water to cool his Tongue, and expression properly belonging only to a material Fire.

And if it be said that the Torments of Hell are sometimes expressed in Scripture, by other things than that of fire: and another that therefore fire is to be understood not properly but figuratively; I answer, that there are other Torments of Hell, besides those of fire, and that these are they which are expressed here, by those other things; as that of a guilty Conscience in particular is peculiar, which is represented, in the Text from which these thoughts are fetch this Argument, by a *worm that dyeth not*: but which is there plainly represented as a thing different from the fire of Hell: *Where the worm dyeth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

And if it be farther urg'd that the fire of Hell being said in Scripture to be prepared for the Devil and his Angels, spiritual Beings, and allotted to wicked Men, not till after the Resurrection when they shall have received their spiritual Bodies, we cannot possibly take it to be material Fire: because it is utterly inconceivable to Reason how such Fire can any way affect spiritual Beings. I shall think it enough to answer, that our notions of the nature of Angels, And of our own spiritual Bodies, Miseries also of that Fire which shall be in Hell, supposing it to be a material Fire, are but very dark and imperfect, and consequently not to be argu'd from with any great certainty; and moreover, that it does not seem at all more wonderful that spirits should be affected by such Fire, than that they should be united to bodies of flesh, and affected and influenced by them, as we are sure our Souls now are, tho' we know not how. *Woe*, saith St. Augustin, *may we not say that spirits may be tormented by corporeal Fire, when it is plain that the Souls of Men are now included in bodily Members, after a wonderful indeed, but real manner?* [De Civit. Dei l. 21. c. 10.]

However, be this as it will, it is agreed on all hands, that the Torments, design'd under the name of fire, will be very great and insupportable. And not less to be sure than those

of material Eire would be, but rather vastly greater. It being not usual in Scripture, when speaking of the things of another Life, to represent them by things greater than themselves, but frequently, I believe we may say always, by lesser.

I shall but just mention one thing more under this head and that is, that both the *Jews* and *Gentiles*, did suppose another Torment for the wicked, directly contrary to this of burning, viz *extreme cold*; and made the Element of water as well as that of fire, as the Deluge as well as the *fire and brimstone* did of old, contribute to their punishment, And St. Jerome who without doubt had this notion from the *Jews*, explains those words of *Job* 24. 19. (as they are render'd by the *vulgar Latin*) *He shall pass from waters of snow to excessive heat*, to this purpose. *Job*, saith he, seems to me to speak here of two Hells, two places of torment, *Fire and Cold*: perhaps in Hell the torment of the *Damn'd* will be of that nature, that they will sometimes feel excessive heat, and at other times as excessive cold. Nay, and some learned Men strive to draw what our Saviour saith, of the *gnashing teeth* of the wicked in Hell, to countenance this notion: as if that were nothing else but a knocking of their teeth together, occasion'd by extreme shivering cold. And it must be acknowledged that the *ῥῥῖσμος τῶν ὀδόντων*, which we translate *gnashing teeth*, is sometimes us'd in prophane Authors, to signify the knocking of the teeth together, which is occasion'd by the shiverings of an Ague. And then as to the *Heathens*, (a) it is well known that of their two Rivers, into which the *Damn'd* were to be thrown, the one *Pariphegethon* was extreme hot and the other *Cocytus* or *Archeron* extreme cold. And the *Periphetans* likewise have pick'd up this notion, and inserted it into their *Alcoran*. But there being little or no ground for it in Scripture, I shall be contented with just mentioning it, and pass on to consider the last aggravating circumstances of the Torments of the *Damn'd*, viz.

Fifthly, The uninterrupted continuance, and eternal duration of them. For so the Scripture tells us, that *the smoake of torment* of the wicked *ascendeth up for ever and ever*, and that *they have no rest day nor Night*; and again that they shall be *tormented day and night for ever and ever. Revel. 14. 11. 20.* And what a dreadful addition will this be to the Torments of the *Damn'd*, that they shall be without intermission, and without

(a) *Plato. Phædo. Max Tyr. dissertat. 29.*

being out end? Will not the very thoughts of this give a keener edge to all their Sufferings, and be a kind of new Hell to them. But I shall say no more of this here, because I design to treat particularly of the Eternity of Hell-Torments, in my following Discourses, and under that shall have occasion to say something of the uninterrupted continuance of them.

It remains only that I draw some few inferences from what has been said and so conclude. And,

First, It seems very obvious to observe that the Greatness of Hell-Torments is a full answer to that difficulty about the dispensations of Providence, as to the prosperity of wicked Men in this World: since it is plain from hence, that, however Providence may suffer them to flourish here for a while, yet in Hell, it will be sure to be even with them, at the long run, even to the uttermost farthing. So that wicked Men can have no reasonable encouragement to go on in their Sins, nor good Men to envy the Worldly prosperity of the wicked, *because vengeance against an evil work is not speedily executed.* Eccles. 8. 11, 13. For, as the Wise-Man speaks, *tho' a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolong'd, yet sure I know that it shall not be well with the wicked.* God indeed is rich in goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering toward the wicked, being desirous by these to lead them to Repentance. But, if they despise these, and still continue hard and impenitent in their hearts, they then only *treasure up to themselves wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will certainly, sooner or later render to every man according to his deeds, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every Soul of Man that doth evil.* Rom. 2. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9.

Secondly, The Greatness of Hell-Torments is a plain proof, of the Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Goodness of God; his wisdom, in guarding and securing his own Laws, Honour and Authority, with the threatnings of such dreadful Punishments, as are sufficient to keep his Creatures in awe of him, and prevent their Rebellion against him; his goodness, in making damnation so very terrible a thing, that if Men would but well consider and seriously attend to it, it would be, morally speaking, impossible for any one Man ever to be damn'd. God indeed has made his Terrors strong and powerful enough to overcome men, and to deter them from complying with the most tempting temptations to do Evil. So that if, after all, Men will be damn'd, they must e'en take their Damnation to themselves, and

and acknowledge that God was *unwilling that any should perish* since he has done *abundantly enough* to scarce Men from coming so much as near the borders of Hell: all indeed that he could do, without laying such a force and necessity upon Men, as by no means agreeable to their nature, as free Agents.

Thirdly, Since it has been evidently made out, that the Torments of Hell will certainly be inconceivably Great, what signifieth it to be mighty nice and curious in enquiring into the nature, and particular kinds of them. That, in the general they will be inconceivably great, this is surely motive enough to us, to use our utmost endeavours for the avoiding of them: and this is the great use of our knowledge of them. At least if this be not sufficient, it is to be fear'd that a more particular knowledge, if it could be had, would not much mend the matter.

Fourthly, From what has been said concerning the Nature of Hell-Torments, we should learn to be extremely careful not to cherish in our selves, and make as it were habitual and con-natural to us, any troublesome Lusts and Passions in this World. For, besides that God will inflict Punishments upon us hereafter for so doing, these Lusts and Passions will go themselves into another, World, along with us, and there become our Tormentors; nay, and moreover get new and infinite sharper Stings there, than they had here. They are indeed a Hell growing up within us: and sure seeds of wo and misery which shall spring up and break forth in a plentiful Crop, in the Devils Kingdom.

Lastly, From the consideration of the Greatness of Hell-Torments, appears the vast disproportion that there is, between the pleasures of Sin, and the pains or punishments of it. The one faint and languid, the other quick and lively to the highest degree: one uncertain, rare and fugitive, the other constant fix'd and permanent: the one frequently broken and interrupted, the other without relaxation or intermission: the one mightily mix'd and allay'd, the other pure and unmingled: the one always below our conception and expectation of the other above all conception or apprehension: the one limited within narrow bounds, the other next to infinite: the one but for a season, the other for all eternity. Were we to weigh on the Temporal Pains and Inconveniencies of Sin, against the pleasures of it: I doubt not but we should find these full heavy enough to turn the balance against them; but, when to the

we add that black after reckoning which awaits Sinners in another World, that sad Eternity of woe which is there laid up for them, Good God ! How infinitely do they outweigh them ? And how then, in the name of reason, can it possibly come to pass that we should find the pleasures of Sin so much courted and esteem'd, and the punishments of it so much slighted and disregarded ? How can it possibly be, that Beings, endow'd with sound understanding and discretion, should be content to sell themselves to unspeakable and everlasting misery, only for the trifling and perishing Enjoyments of this Life ? It cannot be from any other cause, than their want of making aright use of that Judgment which God has given them : It could never would they, but every now and then seriously consider with themselves, *what the end of those men shall be, that obey not the Gospel of Christ*, 2 Thess. 1. 8. and sincerely ask themselves, *how they shall be able to drink of the wine of the wrath of God, when it shall be pour'd out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation*. Rev. 14. 10.

Oh let us then frequently, with an eye of faith, take a view of the Torments of Hell : and then we shall be most ready to suffer any thing, for the avoiding of them ; to *pluck out a right eye, to cut off a right hand*, that is, to part with any thing, however dear and precious to us, rather than our, *whole body should be cast into Hell*. Matt. 5. 29, 30. And how inviting the pleasures of Sin, or the Company of sinners may outwardly appear to be : yet let us, at our utmost peril, beware of them. For, as the Son of Sirach truly observes, *The congregation of the wicked is like Two wrapped together, and the fire of them is a flame of fire to destroy them*, Ecclus. 21. 9. 10. *tho' the way of sinners be made plain with Stones, yet at the end thereof is the pit of Hell*.

The Eternity of Hell-Torments:

SERMON V.

MATTH. 25. 41.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

I Now come to the last thing, which I propos'd to treat from these Words, *Viz. the Eternity of Hell-Torments* which I shall consider in this following method,

First, I will prove, from several plain Texts of Scripture that the Torments of Hell will be truly and properly eternal or have a duration without end.

Secondly, I will lay before you the Arguments, which are drawn from Reason, in proof of this Point.

Thirdly, I will more particularly explain to you, what we are to understand by the Eternity of Hell-Torments: in order to obviate those false meanings, which the Socinians and others give of several of those Texts of Scripture, upon which we build our belief of it.

Lastly, I will answer the most material objections, against the Eternity of Hell-Torments, and so conclude.

The two first these will, I doubt, take up all that time which your patience will allow me at present. And indeed they are both very material and important Subjects, by means slightly to be pass'd over; especially at this time, when the Eternity of Hell-Torments is so much call'd in question and that too by those Men, who value themselves upon the being critical interpreters of Scripture, and exact Masters of Reason.

But, in order to shew either that their skill, or something else, is not always so good as it should be, I shall hasten

First, To prove, from several plain Texts of Scripture, that the Torments of Hell will be truly and properly Eternal; or have a duration without end. And, for this purpose, I desire you seriously to consider these followings Texts. *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* that is, saith the Jewish Targum upon the place, *with the eternal fire of Hell.* Isaiah 33. 14. *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the Earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt:* a Text which many of the best of the Jewish Expositors (a) understand, of the general Resurrection, and the eternal rewards and punishments, which shall then be bestow'd upon good and bad Men. Dan. 12. 2. *To be cast into everlasting fire,* Matt. 18. 8. *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,* Matt. 24. 41. and in the 46th. Verse of the same Chapter, *These, the wicked, shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* *Eternal damnation,* Mark 9. 29. *A worm that dyeth not, and a fire that shall never be quenched,* Mark 9. 43, 44, 45, 46, 48. *Everlasting destruction,* 2 Thess. 1. 9. *Eternal Judgment,* Heb. 9. 27. *the blackness of darkness for ever,* Jude 13. And Revel. 14. 11. *The smoke of the torment of the wicked ascendeth up for ever and ever,* and again, 20. 10. *They shall be tormented for ever, and ever.* Concerning which Texts, there are, these three things well worthy our Observation.

First, That the very same words are us'd in them, to express the Eternity of Hell-Torments, which are us'd in Scripture to express the Eternity of the Joys of Heaven, nay and even of God himself. For so the same word, which is us'd to express the everlasting-ness of the burnings of Hell, and of the contempt of the wicked, in the above cited Texts of the Prophets Isaiah and Daniel, is us'd (b) to express the Eternity of God himself in many places of the Old Testament, and throughout the whole New Testament; the same word is constantly us'd to express everlasting Life, the everlasting God, and everlasting Fire, everlasting Punishment, everlasting Destruction, Eternal Damnation; Since then it is universally allow'd that these words, when apply'd to God and the Joys of Heaven, denote a true and proper Eternity: why must they not have the same sense, when apply'd to the Torments of Hell?

(a) Menasseh v. Ben. Israel, de Resurrect. Mortuor. c. 3. sect. 5, 6.

(b) Gen. 21. 33. Isa. 40. 28. Rom. 6. 22. Rom. 16. 26. Mat. 25. 41, 46. 2 Thess. 1. 9. Mark 3. 29.

I know it will be answer'd that, tho' these words are frequently us'd in Scripture to signify a true and proper Eternity, yet they are not always us'd so, but sometimes signify only a diuturnity, or very long duration of time, which shall have an end, tho' perhaps not till many ages are past: and that therefore there can be no necessity of understanding them here of a strict and proper Eternity. And why then should we not choose to take the favourable side? Why should it not be sufficient to allow, that the Torments of Hell will be, in some sense Eternal, that is, of very long duration and continuance, tho' not strictly and properly everlasting?

Now, tho' I readily grant that the words are sometimes us'd, in this sense of a diuturnity or very long duration only, yet I must observe, that it is very rarely that they are so us'd, more especially in the *New Testament*; and moreover that my two remaining Observations, upon the above quoted Texts of Scripture, will afford us very good reasons, why this sense will not do in our present case. I observe therefore

Secondly, That the very same words are us'd, in the very same Texts of Scripture, to express the *everlasting happiness* of the *Righteous*, and the *everlasting misery* of the *Wicked*, and that too, without the least intimation of any kind, that the words are not to have the same sense on both sides. For in *Daniel*, the very same word is us'd to express the everlastingness of the life or happiness of the righteous, and of the contempt or misery of the wicked: and so, in *St. Matthew*, the very same word expresseth both. *These, the wicked, shall be cast away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal or everlasting, αἰώνιον* the very same word in both places. that there is not the least pretence for setting up two different senses of the words, in these places. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit seems to have us'd the same word both of the happiness of the righteous, and the misery of the wicked, in the same places, on purpose that we might have no manner of handle for making a difference as to the Eternity of the one, but might be constrain'd to own the one, by owning the other.

Thirdly, We have, in the foremention'd Texts, repeated Assertions of, an variety of Expressions for, the Eternity of Hell torments: and all very full and significant, it is not said over and over again, that they are everlasting: but they are represented as a *worm that dyeth not*, and a *fire that*

never be quench'd; Mark 9. 43. nay, there is one Expression, of their lasting for ever and ever, which is not so much as once us'd, throughout the whole New Testament, to signify any thing less than a true and proper Eternity. So that, upon the whole, God seems to have express'd his mind to us as fully and clearly, in this point, as words can do it: and we must be strangely obstinate and partial to our selves, if because we do not like the Eternity of Hell torments, we will not believe it, tho' never so plainly reveal'd to us.

To what has been said I shall farther add, that we have the judgment of almost the whole Christian Church in all Ages, on our side, as to this point; very few, of all the *Fathers* of the Church, having favour'd the contrary opinion: and *Origen* having been severely reprov'd and animadverted upon, by the best of the *Fathers* for so doing: and his opinion, in this particular, always reckon'd, by *St. Austin*, *Epiphanius* and other *Caloguers* of the ancient (a) *Heresies*, as *Heretical*. And this Consideration ought, one would think, to weigh very much with private Christians: and to keep them from going, hastily at least, against the common and constant sense of the primitive and purest times of Christianity, into the opinions of a new and upstart Sect, who, having first divested our Lord of his Divinity, is no great wonder that they afterwards endeavour to disarm him of his Thunder, and to blunt the edge of his Threatnings.

However, should we suppose at present (I say suppose, for is what I can, by no means, allow, all Circumstances consider'd) that the words, which are us'd in Scripture to express the Eternity of Hell-Torments, might be indifferently taken, either for a true and proper Eternity, or a diuturnity or long duration only, and refer it to Reason, which sense we should choose: I doubt not but even Reason it self would determine on our side, in this case. As will more clearly appear, when come.

Secondly, To lay before you the Arguments, which are drawn from Reason, for proof of the Eternity of Hell-Torments. And this I shall do, with great freedom and impartiality: having first premis'd these two things.

(a) *Aug. i. contra Priscillianist. & Origenist. c. 5, 6. Epiphani. cont. Origen. Heres. 64. Eftius in l. 4. wistm. p. 297.*

First, That I do not pretend to argue altogether from pure simple Reason, but from Reason judging of this matter, as propos'd with all its Circumstances, by Revelation. For, tho' I will not say that Reason it self was sufficient, for the finding out, and certainly fixing and determining, this point: yet I shall make no doubt to say that, as this is offer'd to our consideration by Revelation, Reason doth consent to, and approve it. 'Tis true indeed that some of the Heathens, by the meer Light of Reason, did frame some sort of notion of the Eternity of Hell-Torments; but then it must be consider'd that this was both very rare, and very imperfect. Generally speaking, they held certain periods of time, a thousand years &c. when all the wicked should be releas'd from their Torments. And those of them, who did maintain the Eternity of Hell-Torments, yet maintain'd it only as to the most heinous and notorious Sinners: but allow'd all others, of a lower degree, after a duration of their Torments, proportionable to their crimes, and sufficient, as they imagin'd, for their purification or lustration, to be freed from them.

Secondly, That I do by no means lay the stress of this cause upon Reason, but Scripture. For it cannot be deny'd, that the everlastingness of Hell-Torments, depends very much upon the free-will and pleasure of God, which cannot certainly and undoubtedly be known, any other way than by Revelation. And therefore my great end, in using these Arguments from Reason, is to prove to those Men who pretend such a mighty regard for Reason, that Reason is so far from contradicting the Scripture in this point, that it do's very much countenance and confirm it: but not to put the proof of this matter wholly upon Reason; which, beyond all question, has its only full and incontestable proof, from Revelation.

These things being premis'd: I proceed to lay before you the Arguments, commonly urg'd from Reason, on this behalf. And

First, It is alledg'd that sin, being an offence against eternal God, ought according to the strict rules of Justice which require that the punishments of Offenders should be proportion to the dignity of the person offended, to have eternal Torments for its punishment.

But here I will freely own, that I cannot see the force of this Argument: nor do I at all apprehend the necessity of giving a Sinner's punishment eternal, because God is so:

was it ever practis'd among Men, as a proper Rule and Measure of punishing, to make the punishments of Offenders of equal duration, as far as they were able, with the lives or beings of the persons offended. I readily grant that, in punishing offenders, great regard ought to be had to the dignity of the person offended; but then, there are other ways of shewing this regard than by thus lengthening out their punishment; as by the intenseness and extraordinary height and acuteness of those Torments, which are allotted them, for their punishment, &c.

Besides, if this Argument proves any thing, it proves a great deal too much. For, if the punishment of every sin must be eternal, because God is so; then, by the same reason, the punishment of every sin must be infinite likewise, because God is so too. And, if the punishment of every sin must be infinite and eternal, because it is an offence against an infinite and eternal God; then all degrees of punishment must necessarily be taken away (there being no such thing as degrees in Infinite and Eternal) which yet is directly contrary both to Reason and Scripture. Moreover, at this rate of arguing, the rewards of good Men, as well as the punishments of bad, must necessarily be infinite and eternal. For they, having serv'd and infinite and eternal God, ought according to the strict Rules of Justice, which require that rewards, as well as punishments, should bear a proportion to the dignity of the person, whom we serve, to have an infinite and eternal Reward. And if so, this will mightily take off from the free Grace of God, so much magnify'd in Scripture, upon account of the exceeding greatness and eternity of those rewards, which he has there promised to his faithful Servants: since these, it seems, are but a just and necessary debt to them, they are to be rewarded at all.

But, tho' I cannot by any means allow all, that some Men would infer from this Argument: yet thus much I cannot help observing upon it; That a Sinner's daring to offend a God of infinite and eternal Majesty, who shall ever live, and have in his power to take vengeance of him, to what degree he pleaseth: and moreover a God, to whom he owes all that he is, or is, and who has laid numberless and most powerful obligations upon him, to serve and please him, to the utmost of his ability: and to offend such a God, not once or twice only, but frequently, and by a continu'd course of disobedience, not thro' chance or mistake, but voluntarily and of set

purpose : A Sinner's daring to do all this, I say, is such monstrous folly, ingratitude and presumption altogether, such an impudent and often repeated provocation and defiance of Divine Vengeance : that we must needs own it to be a sufficient ground for, and Justification of, God's punishing Sinners eternally, if he shall so think fit.

And, if it be universally acknowledg'd to be lawful and just among Men, for very great and outrageous Crimes, to inflict such punishments upon offenders, as shall affect the whole duration of their Lives, which is all of their beings that we have any power over : it cannot sure be thought unjust in God to inflict such punishments upon Sinners, as shall affect the whole duration of their beings, all which he has full power over ; there being plainly in this case as much difference in the greatness of the Crimes, as in the duration of the punishments.

Secondly, It must be consider'd that sin is a voluntary refusal and contempt of eternal happiness, and, upon that account, richly deserves, eternal misery for its punishment, according to that of St. *Austin*, *De Civit. Dei* l. 21. *The Men is well worthy of eternal punishments, who hinders himself from becoming eternally happy.* And indeed it cannot be deny'd that the eternity of the joys of Heaven, makes the belief of the eternity of the Torments of Hell sit much easier upon our minds, than it would otherwise have done. Had the Eternity been only on the punishing side, this would have look'd hard and not altogether agreeable to our notions, of the Divine Goodness : but, being on the rewarding side likewise, we have here infinite Goodness and infinite Justice set one against the other ; and what reason can any Man possibly have to complain of this ? Nay, the very certainty of the joys of Heaven is an intimation, and kind of presumptive proof of the certainty of the Torments of Hell : inasmuch as we are sure that God is every whit as much an enemy to Vice, as he is a friend to Virtue, and have therefore all the reason that can be to expect that he will exert himself every whit as much, in the punishing of the one, as in the rewarding of the other.

When God has been so abundantly gracious, as out of his own free Goodness and loving Kindness, to offer everlasting Happiness to Mankind, if they will accept of it : is it not very reasonable to suppose, that he will to the utmost retaliate their refusal and contempt of the riches of this his Goodness

is it not very natural to believe that he will give the Contemners of everlasting Happiness, everlasting cause to remember, bewail and repent of this their folly? Doth it not seem very just, that he should everlastingly keep them in being, that so they may to all eternity think on that everlasting Happiness which they have refus'd; And that, by making them feel what and eternity of wo is, they may be sensible to the utmost what they have lost, loosing an eternity of Happiness?

Thirdly, It is farther urg'd that Sinners, tho' not actually, yet in will and intention, do sin eternally: and therefore ought, in all justice, to suffer eternal punishment. For tho', because God allows Sinners but a temporal Life in this State of tryal and probation, they have it not in their power to sin actually to all eternity, yet this is no thank to them, who in all probability, were they to live here eternally, wou'd eternally go on in their sins; And it becomes the great justice of our Judge, saith St. Gregory. * *that they, who in this Life would never be without sin, should in the next never be without punishment.* And indeed, what is here alledg'd is certainly true thus far, viz, that Sinners do voluntarily contract, and settle themselves in, such wicked Habits, as, without the assistance of God's Grace, which may very reasonably be deny'd to them, who have so often affronted and done despite to his Holy Spirits, do naturally infer a necessity of sinning everlastingly. I do not say that Sinners formally design to sin, as long as they can: I believe the quite contrary, that most Sinners propose to themselves one time or other to leave their sins; but however, since they willfully, and well knowing the danger of this consequence, engage and persevere in such Habits as, without the assistance of the Holy Spirit, must bring them under a necessity of sinning everlastingly: and moreover have so often anger'd and abus'd, griev'd and quench'd the Holy Spirit, while it was offering its assistance to them, and even praying and importuning them to accept of it, that they may very reasonably be suppos'd quite to have driven it from them: it is plain that they have done all that is necessary, on their part, toward the making themselves eternal Sinner. And then, what assurance can reason give that God will not think fit to construe them such, and to deal with them accordingly?

* L. 34. moral. c. 12. & l. 4. Dial. c. 44.

Others have thought to carry this matter, yet farther, by saying, that in Hell the wicked shall go on to sin, to bear an ill will to God and to blaspheme him, &c. and consequently shall very justly suffer eternal Torments, for sinning actually to all eternity. And this they endeavour to prove by two Texts of Scripture, one Psalm 73. 8, 9, 11. *They, the wicked, speak loftily. They set their mouth against the Heavens: and they say, how doth God know? is there knowledge in the most High?* the other Revel. 16. 9. *And men were scorch'd with great heat, and blasphem'd the name of God, which hath power over these Plagues, and they repented not, to give him glory.* Now, tho' these Texts do by no means prove, what they are brought for, because they both certainly relate to the behaviour of the wicked in this World; yet, I believe, the substance of what these Men aim at, viz, that the wicked shall continue in Hell to act wickedly, will be deny'd by no body: both, because it is plain that they carry a wicked and wretchedly deprav'd Nature with them, out of this World into the other, and we have no reason to think that it will not continue the same there, that it was here: and also, because the Scriptures constantly represent the Devil and his Angels (and I suppose the case of wicked Men will be much the same in Hell) as utter enemies to every thing that is good, and extremely pleas'd and delighted with every thing that is bad. But then it must be consider'd that, how wicked soever the damn'd may be in Hell, they will not suffer upon account of the wickedness which they shall act there, that being no place of Tryal and Probation, of Merit or Demerit (as the School-Men love to speak) but upon account of their having so habituated themselves to wickedness in this World, that they have thereby brought upon themselves this necessary consequence of sinning everlastingly in the other. So that tho', strictly speaking, their sinning in Hell everlastingly, in it self consider'd, is not a reason why they should be everlastingly punish'd, yet, consider'd in its cause, as proceeding from Mens voluntary Behaviour in this Life, which was a state of Tryal and Probation, and as it has, thro' their own fault, made them proper objects of God's everlasting wrath, by making them everlasting actual sinners, it seems to be a very good reason for it.

Fourthly, Another Argument, for the belief of the eternity of Hell-Torments, is taken from the consideration of the good that some Divines have thought, may be everlastingly done

by them, to the Angels and Saints in another Life: to whom they think, they will be a most powerful Motive, to use all possible care to keep their Glorious Stations, and to take heed of falling from their Mansions of bliss. And indeed, if we can have reason to suppose that the Blessed in Heaven can, any way, be profited by the eternal Sufferings of the Damn'd, this will give a vey good account of, and consequently a very strong Argument for, their suffering everlastingly.

But, it will be said, shall there then be any danger, after this Life, of the Angels and Saints, not keeping their Blessed Estate? Will not their time of Tryal and Probation be then over, the reign of the old Tempter at an end, and consequently their danger at an end too? I answer distinctly, first as to the Angels, and then as to just Men made perfect, because there is a great deal of difference in their cases?

As to the Angels; I conceive, their case will always be just the same, that it was, when they fell before. They had then no Tempter, any more then they will have now; they had the same motives, as far as we know, as strong then, as they will have now, to beware of rebelling against God, and by so doing forfeiting their happy Estate, and moreover making themselves liable to the extremest misery: and yet, notwithstanding this, it is plain in fact, that they did make a shift to fall from Heaven and Happiness. The addition therefore of some new motive, in order to make them more secure in the everlasting Possession of their happiness, seems to be very proper for them: and what motive can be added, more effectual for this purpose, than the sight of those everlasting Torments, which shall certainly be the portion of all those, who shall dare to offend God, and fall into which therefore they must certainly fall, if ever they fall from Heaven? It may be said indeed that allowing all this to be so, yet the everlasting Damnation of the fall'n Angels, those of their own kind, may be sufficient to warn and everlastingly keep the Angels in Heaven fearful and careful to avoid the same, but most least they should fall. And I readily grant that it may. But then, if besides they shall plainly see the wickedness of the race of Mankind, whom God lov'd so well as to send his Son into the World to seek and to save them, sentenc'd to everlasting Damnation likewise, this will still make the Motive to them to beware of falling so much the stronger, and be a yet more conviction to them that there cannot possibly be the least hope of rebelling against God, and yet escaping his righteous Judgment for evermore.

Next,

Next, *as to just Men made perfect*; I make no doubt but that they will be past all danger of falling from their Happiness and Glory, in another Life; but then I take it that the great reason why they will be so, is, because they will there have the most powerful Motives, than can possibly influence rational and free Agents (and such, surely they will always there continue) to avoid every thing that might in the least tend to endanger their happiness. And the more there shall be of the motives, the more secure undoubtedly their State will be. And not many motives will more prevalent, for this purpose, than the eternal sight and contemplation of these Torments, which all Sinners, as well Angels as Men are everlastingly doom'd to: and which, if they should become sinners, they should infallibly be everlastingly doom'd to in like manner.

So far then as the everlasting Torments of the damn'd mutually minister to the Advantage and Security, either of the Saint or Angels, in the Enjoyment of their Cælestial happiness (and from what has been said, it appears to me not altogether improbable that they may, in some measure, contribute to this end) so far our Reason will give us good ground to believe the Eternity of Hell-Torments.

Besides, the eternal Punishments of the damn'd will eternally help to make the Blessed still more and more sensible of their happiness, and continue and perpetuate in their minds a due sense of it: forasmuch as in them they will eternally behold those dreadful Torments, which they, through the Divine Assistance, have been enabled to escape: and, like shipwrecked Persons gotten safe to Land, admire and rejoyce the more in their own safety, by how much the more they look back on that dreadful Storm, which they so narrowly escap'd. And this will likewise everlastingly be an occasion of quickning and enlarging their praises and thanksgivings to God; inasmuch as one of the Ancients speaks, they shall so much the more be sensible of their eternal Obligations to the Divine Grace, how much they shall behold those Evils and Torments which they, through its Assistance, have happily avoided, to be eternal. * And this also will give them eternal occasion to reverence and adore the Infinite Holiness and justice of God: to rejoice and triumph (not in the sufferings of their fellow Creatures, but themselves consider'd) but as they are the Manifestation

* *Gregor. lib. 4. Dialog. c. 44.*

God's Justice, and Almighty Power, and Victory over his Enemies, and consequently bring great Glory and Honour to him: and to detest and abhor sin more and more, for ever and ever. And in this sense some understand the words of the Psalmist: *The righteous shall rejoyce when he seeth the vengeance;* 58. 10. tho' most certainly they are there meant, of the judgments of God upon wicked Men in this life: and those of Prophet Isaiah 66. 24. *Their worm shall not dy, neither shall their fire be quench'd, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.*

From all which it is plain, that the ends which God may give, by the eternal Torments of the damn'd, are very great and noble, very well becoming him to design and promote; and, from this consideration alone methinks we might be strongly inclin'd to believe that it will be so, even tho' the Gospel had not so clearly reveal'd to us, that it shall be so.

Lastly, It is utterly inconceivable to Reason, how the damn'd will ever get rid of the guilt of their Sins, and, if not of the guilt, to be sure not of the punishment of them. The Heathens used fancy'd that the Fire of Hell would have a lustrating or cleansing quality, by which it would be able, in some considerable tract of time, to make most sinners clean from their Sins; yea most sinners; for even they suppos'd that the Sins of very great and heinous Offenders could never, by this means, be wash'd away: and that therefore their punishment must be eternal. But this is plainly a gross and material conceit; for, how fit soever fire may be to purge material things (as it is thought by many, the elements of this world will be cleans'd and purify'd by the last conflagration) yet it is evident that it have no cleansing quality for Souls, immaterial Substances, whose dross and filth, if I may so speak, lyes all in the will, and can be reach'd and separated thence by no other Fire, but that of the Holy Spirit.

There are but two ways, by which Sinners can in the least be able to remove the guilt of their past Sins, viz offering a sufficient Atonement or Satisfaction to the Divine Justice for them, or repenting of them and both these, we have great reason to believe, the damn'd will be utterly incapable of. As to satisfaction, it is plain they can offer none from themselves, they being all condemn'd Persons, and each man's utmost sufferings being but the just punishment of his Sins. And where shall they look for satisfaction from another? The only person capable, either in Earth or Hea-

ven, to make satisfaction for them, they did wilfully refuse when he would have satisfy'd for them: and, having done so they can have no reason to hope for any farther offers of the kind from him. Nay, he himself has plainly cut off all ground for such hopes, by telling them, that there *remains now no more Sacrifice for Sin*: Heb. 10. 26. 5. 9. and that the benefit of his satisfaction should extend to such persons only, as should repent of their Sins, before their departure out of this World.

And then, for Repentance what capacity can any person be for that (supposing it would do without an Atonement, which yet we have great reason to believe it would not) when he is under the actual Punishment of the most severe and intolerable Torments, for his sins? Is such a Man in a condition of willing and acting freely, as Repentance must be an act of pure freedom and choice? Are not his Torments a constraint upon him to repent of his Sins, I mean so far to repent of them, as to make him wish that he had not brought himself, into the State of Torment, by them? Can a Man feel misery, and not wish that he were out on't? But what proof is this, of a thorough reformation of heart and life, of hating Vice and loving Virtue for their own sakes, and upon account of the acceptableness of the one, and odiousness of the other, in the sight of God; in which the nature of a true Repentance does chiefly consist? How shall they give proof of their Repentance who are not in a State of Liberty, and consequently not in a State of Tryal and Probation? Or what reasonable Assurance can they give themselves, that they shall ever be put into such a State? Have they not once been in such an one already, and most inexcusably and obstinately abus'd that; and is not this a very good reason, why they should not expect any other? Will not their own Reason join with the Scripture, in declaring to them, that, since they would not accept of Salvation, when it was most lovingly and freely offer'd to them, they shall never have any farther offers of it; that, since they did so long abuse and affront God's patience and long suffering, when it was attending upon them in this World, and endeavouring to lead them to Repentance, they shall never, in the next World, taste any more of it, in the next World? will not their trial of Trval their day of Grace, be there at an end, and consequently their very power of repenting at an end too? And what then must necessarily follow, but that, *as the tree is fall'en, must lie for ever*: that those who are *unjust, must be unjust*

and those who are filthy be filthy still: and, being eternally
just and eternally filthy, be likewise eternally wretched and
eternally miserable?

These are the principal Arguments, which are brought from
Reason, in proof of the Eternity of Hell-Torments: And, I
hope, they are abundantly sufficient for the end, for which
I design'd them: *viz.* to show that our Reason does very nat-
urally fall in and agree, with what Revelation offers, upon
this head.

Let us then now sum up the whole Evidence, and see what
the Issue of our cause will be. We have here the Eternity of
Hell-Torments express'd, by the Holy Spirit, in words as
plain and proper, as could possibly be chosen for that purpose,
and that too frequently, and with great variety of Expression;
I have almost the whole Christian Church, in all Ages, in-
terpreting these Words and Expressions, of a true and proper
Eternity: nay, we have the Scripture it self determining its
sense, in this point, by such circumstances, as can never
be reconcil'd to any other sense than that, which we have
been pleading for. And all that can be said against this is, that
there is a bare possibility that these words should have an-
other sense: because they are sometimes, tho' very rarely,
used in another sense in Scripture, especially in the New Test-
ament.

Add to this, that our Reason highly favours this Assertion
of the Eternity of Hell-Torments: and gives us such good
Arguments, why it may be: and discovers such noble uses of
it if it should be: and is so entirely at a loss to find out how,
according to the order in which God has put things, it can
possibly be otherwise: that from these alone, abstracted from
all other Considerations, it must be granted that we have, at
least, fair probabilities that it will be.

And how then can it possibly come to pass, that Men who
pretend to believe the Scriptures, and to be all obedience to
Reason, can yet continue doubtful, in so plain a case? How
can any wise Man answer it to himself, even supposing that
there were some ground for doubting about this matter, yet not
take the safest side in this doubtful case, which most certain-
lyours is? We, by the believing the Eternity of Hell-Tor-
ments, shall be the more excited and spur'd on to Care and
Diligence in providing for our future State, and, by this means,
shall infallibly gain this advantage, that we shall the more surely
avoid

avoid the Torments of Hell, whither they be eternal or no. Whereas they on the other side, slackning and abating the rigour of the Gospel threatnings, will be too apt to slacken and abate their care and industry too, as to their Salvation, and so may happen to loose their Souls, out of a niggardly fear only, of believing too much.

But it will be said, is not the belief of a long duration of Hell-Torments, for a thousands years suppose, a sufficient motive to men, to perform the conditions of the Gospel, that so they may avoid these Torments? I answer, that I think it ought to be so to all Men, and will certainly be so to every truly wise Man. But this is not the Question here; we are not debating what we may think sufficient, but what God has been pleas'd actually to threaten: whither, strictly and properly speaking, everlasting Torments in Hell for sinners or no. And how powerful a motive soever the fear of very lasting Torments may be, we are sure the fear of everlasting Torments will be a more powerful one; and we do not find even the fear so very effectual that we should dare, without the plain reasons for so doing, to abate and take off from the rigour of it. Besides, I cannot help suspecting, that the same self-conceit, or carnal affection, or suggestion of the Devil, which makes Men unwilling to believe the Eternity of Hell-Torments, will soon make them as unwilling to believe their long duration, or indeed any thing at all of them. For so it is generally seen, that Infidelity grows apace, and that Men soon come, from doubting of any one point, especially in a great moment, to doubt of all. And indeed, according to the grounds upon which these Men in this case, it would not be at all strange to find them doubting in many more. Nor so we find they actually do, and that too in cases of the highest importance, the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour,

Let us then be extremely cautious, how we venture to weaken the *Terrours of the Lord*, by expounding away, in great measure, the force of them: least, by so doing, we shorten our selves, and make others do so too, of that fear and diligence, with which we ought all to work out our Salvation. Let us seriously consider, whither this be not the sin of diminishing from God's book (for it is much at one to diminish from the sense, or from the letter of it) and whither, if it be so, we shall be able to endure that heavy curse, denounced against this Sin in particular, of having our *parts taken* out

book of Life. Rev. 22. 19. In one word, let us not, without the highest reason, ever begin to doubt of any plain-reveal'd point of Religion, more especially if of great moment, least, by so doing, we give the Devil an handle, to make us doubt of more; and God, in just judgment for our unreasonable doubting, be provok'd to give us up to endless doubting, which is the most uneasy and unmanly State of Life that can be.

Let those of us, who profess that we believe the Eternity of Hell-Torments, endeavour to live, as becomes Men of such belief, with Eternity always in our view, with a due dread and fear of an Eternity of Misery. And, if we are once duly possess'd of this, it will apparently shew it self, in the whole conduct and management of our Lives: in keeping us, in all manner of instances, from every thing that has the least appearance of evil, that may in the least indanger our falling into this sad Eternity of wo. Oh Eternity, Eternity! who can bear the thoughts of being miserable for ever? Who could not do or endure any thing in this World, rather than suffer unspeakable Torments, for ever and ever, in the next? To be in Hell at all is certainly misery enough, but to be there for ever, is to be as miserable, as we possibly can be.

And let those among us, who pretend that they cannot believe the Eternity of Hell-Torments, yet at least shew that they are sincere in these their pretensions, by living up to what they own they can believe. You see there is but small comfort for Sinners, even in the softest sense that can possibly be put, upon the threatnings of the Gospel. A thousand years, whole Ages of Torments, must needs make a terrible impression upon the minds of Men, who ever consider at all: and the case must, beyond all doubt, be very bad, when those who do all that they can do, and a great deal more than they could do, to help it, can make it look no better. You, who say that you think a very long duration of Hell-Torments a sufficient motive to a good life, shew, by your own Lives, that you think so. If you do this, you will both approve your selves to be honest Men, and provoke us, who believe more than you, if we have any shame or sense of our Duty; to an emulation and victory over you, in goodness: and, by this means, to prove whose belief best serves the Interest of God and Religion: and that we may safely take for the truest.

truest. Nay, if you do but live thus, this will be the likeliest way to bring you to the same belief with us, if we are in the right : there being no such ready way to truth, as a good life.

God give us all grace, seriously to lay to heart what has been said, and to learn truly to fear him, who has power to destroy both Body and Soul in Hell, where the Worm dyeth not, and the Fire is not quench'd, yea, I say unto you, to fear him.

The true meaning of the Eternity of Hell-Torments.

SERMON VI.

MATTH. 25. 41.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

I Am now upon the Subject of the *Eternity of Hell-Torments* and have already advanc'd so far in it, as to have prov'd in general, both from Scripture and Reason, that the Torments of Hell will be truly and properly eternal, and have a duration without end.

But because many, of those who seem to allow the Eternity of Hell-Torments in general, or, at least, the Authority of those Texts of Scripture, which, we think, plainly assert it, do nevertheless give such particular explications of what they mean, both by it and them, as do, in great measure, weaken the force, and consequently lessen the influence of them, upon the minds of Men. I therefore think myself oblig'd, in justice to my subject, but much more in justice to God and Religion, and Charity to the Souls of Men, to inquire somewhat more distinctly into this matter ; and, for this purpose, I have propos'd

Thirdly, More particularly to explain, what we are to understand by the Eternity of Hell-Torments: in order to obliterate those false meanings, which the *Socinians* and others give, or several of those Texts of Scripture, upon which we build our belief of it. And, in doing this, I will endeavour,

First, To refute the false meanings, which are given of it, and the Texts of Scripture relating to it. And

Secondly, To shew, and establish, the true meaning.

First, I am to refute the false meanings, which are given of it, and the Texts of Scripture relating to it; and they are these which follow.

First, That the only eternal punishment of the damn'd shall be annihilation, or an utter extinction of their beings.

Secondly, That, if they shall eternally exist, yet they shall have no other eternal punishment, than their loss of God and Heaven, and the natural consequences of that, and of their eternal existence: but shall not moreover eternally undergo positive Torments.

Lastly, That not all the damn'd shall be eternally tormented, but that many of them shall, in time, be releas'd from their Torments.

First, That the only eternal punishment of the damn'd shall be Annihilation, or an utter extinction of their beings. This is maintain'd by many of the *Socinians*, but with this difference, that some hold they shall be immediately annihilated, after the day of Judgment others, that they shall first suffer positive Torments, for a considerable time, and then last be releas'd from being. *Wolffgenious*, upon the 25th of St. *Matthew* and the 46th verse, makes the everlasting punishment, which the wicked are there doom'd to, to be only their perishing for ever; but *Crellius*, explaining * the same text, makes it import, that the wicked shall be first tormented, then shall be extinguish'd and destroy'd. What ground we have from Scripture, for either of these explications, we shall see by and by, when I come to examine the Texts, which they produce, for this purpose.

In the mean time, I cannot but observe to you, that the Texts of Scripture, which are to be produc'd by the *Socinians*, to prove the Annihilation of the wicked, ought to be very plain and full: because both Nature and Reason presume very

frongly on the other side, viz. that *the wicked shall not be annihilated*, And, tho' our notions from Nature and Reason ought always to submit to Revelation, especially in such a case as this, which very much depends upon the positive Will of God : who can certainly best tell, what he wills in it; y^e because Nature and Reason are, in some sense, revealers of God's Will, as well as Scripture, tho' not so perfect ones, may very justly demand from Scripture a clear and full Revelation of God's Will, as to any point : before we depart from that, which we, by our clearest notions of Nature and Reason, take to be his will.

Nature plainly tells us, that the Souls of wicked Men are in themselves, as immortal as those of the good; that they have no principles of alteration or corruption in them, any more than theirs; that they were all created alike at first, and consequently must all alike go on, in virtue of the same Nature, to immortality. So that without a special interposition of the Divine Providence, to put an end to their beings, they must naturally be immortal. And Reason, which knows that God made nothing in vain, cannot tell how to think that when God created the Souls of all Men of an immortal nature, he design'd however that a great part of them, I fear more than the greatest, should not continue, according to their natural Immortal. Especially, when she considers likewise, what vast and glorious ends God may serve, by the Immortality of the wicked : in punishing them mightily for their sins, making them duly sensible of the power of his wrath, and preserving them as everlasting monuments, and examples to all his Creatures; of his Infinite Holiness, Justice and Sovereignty. Now methinks it seems to be a downright contradiction to reason, to suppose that God should so far favour and befriend the wicked, as to alter the very course of Nature for them, so he may let them out of being : and that too just then, when their very being, even tho' he should not inflict any positive Torments upon them, would, in great measure, become a just and reasonable punishment to them, for their ingratitude and disobedience to him. Nay farther, I cannot see the least ground from reason to expect, that God should be so kind to the wicked, as (even after they have suffer'd very great Torments, for a considerable time) not to keep them to the end of their Nature, but, by stopping the course of it, in an unnatural manner, to release them from being. Why should

and hinder them, from reaping, to the full, this naturally
 everlasting punishment of their sins? What pretensions can
 possibly have to this extraordinary favour from God,
 who, in utter contempt of all his warnings, promises and
 threatenings, in contradiction to the dictates of their own na-
 ture and reason, and in spite of all the strongest obligations
 of duty and gratitude, wilfully, habitually, presumptu-
 ously and with an high hand, flew in his face, trampled under
 his Laws, neglected the great Salvation offer'd by his Son,
 crucify'd and put him to an open shame afresh, griev'd his holy Spirit:
 and, in one word, did all that they could do, to affront
 and provoke God, and cut off all manner of hope of mercy
 and favour from him, in another life? Can there be any
 good sense in, can there be the least shadow or reason for,
 supposing, that God will over-rule and change the natural
 course and order of things, only to save from just punishment,
 Wretches, such Ingrates, such Rebels, such Traytors,
 these?

Well then, let us now come on, and see whither the Scrip-
 tures are so clear and full, in this point, as they ought to be,
 to lead us into the belief of it, against all these strong appea-
 rances and presumptions of Nature and Reason. But alas! so
 shall we be, from finding them so: that excepting a word
 or an expression or two, which, till they come to be confi-
 der'd thoroughly, only look a little this way, there is not the
 least countenance for this notion in Scripture; but a great deal
 of plain proof for the contrary.

It is there said indeed, that God is able to destroy both body
 and soul in Hell: Mat. 10. 28. that the wicked shall be pu-
 nish'd with everlasting destruction: 2 Thes. 1. 9. that their end
 shall be destruction: Phil. 3. 19. and their damnation is call'd their
 destruction; 2 Pet. 3. 7. and these words destroy, destruction
 and perdition are brought, to support this notion of the Anni-
 hilation of the wicked. But why must these words be forc'd
 to signify Annihilation? Are they not frequently us'd, in our
 common language, to signify no more, than the inflicting some
 considerable mischief or torment, as when we say, a Man will ut-
 terly undo, or utterly destroy, us? Do not prophane Au-
 thors, both Greek and Latin, commonly use them in this
 sense? Nay, are they not twice us'd in this very sense, in the
 New Testament, it self? once Luke 4. 34. Where the same

thing seems to be meant, by *destroying* the *unclean Spirit* [*ἀπολέσαι βεσταν/σαι.*] with that which is express'd *Mat.* 8. 29. by tormenting: another time *1 Corinth.* 5. 5. when *St. Paul* commands the *Corinthians*, by virtue of his Authority, to deliver up the incestuous person unto *Satan*, for the *destruction of the flesh*: [*εἰς ὀλέθρον καὶ σαρκός.*] not for annihilating of the flesh I hope, but for the afflicting or tormenting of the flesh: either by diseases, which some suppose the Devil had then power to inflict upon persons excommunicated from the Church, or, at least, by a very grievous and mortifying sorrow, which such severe censures of the Church were then wont to work, in such as were censured by it.

Again it is said, that *he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life*; *Joh.* 3. 36. but there it is plain, by what goeth before, *he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life*, that life is meant the everlasting happiness prepar'd for good Christians; which, tho' it is true, the wicked shall never see, yet they shall see such a life, as shall make them capable of having the wrath of God, to abide on them; as it follows in the latter part of this verse.

Farther, it is urg'd that the damnation of the wicked call'd Death in Scripture; and this sure, if any thing may signify Annihilation. But why so; may not Death as well signify Misery, as Life is frequently us'd to signify Happiness. Nay, doth not the Scripture it self plainly use it in this sense where it tells us, *the fearful, and unbelieving, &c. shall have their part in the lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death*? *Revel.* 21. 8. Certainly burning with fire and brimstone, cannot be death properly speaking or Annihilation: but, being a punishment much greater than death, it is figuratively express'd under the name of death, which is by most Men dreaded, as one of the greatest of Evils. We, saith *Lactantius*, call that punishment or pain the second death, which is as lasting, as immortality it self; and which is of the severest torments. [*De vita beata.* l. 7. l. 2. c. 12.]

Still, some insist, that it is no where said in Scripture, that the wicked shall be immortal: and so far they are in the right; that this is no where said in express words unless we allow the words of *St. Paul* *1 Cor.* 15. 51, 52, 53. that *we shall all be chang'd*, that *the dead shall be rais'd incorruptable*, and that

ortal must put on immortality, to belong to the wicked as well to the good, as many learned Men have thought they do. It is not to dispute this at present, it is plain that all those texts, which assert that the wicked shall be the subjects of everlasting Torments, do necessarily imply that they shall be immortal, If they must depart into everlasting fire, if they must be punished into everlasting punishment, if they shall be tormented for ever and ever, if the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever: these are all very substantial proofs of their Immortality, and of their everlasting existence.

One thing more we often hear of, which is, that several Fathers of the Church, besides Origen before mention'd, as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Theophilus Antiochenus, Tatian, and Arnobius, do very much favour this opinion, that the wicked shall be annihilated. To which I have time now only to answer thus much: that, whatever unwary Expressions any of these Fathers may have dropt, in their Writings, which may seem to look this way, they generally speak as clearly and fully on the other side, of the wick'ds being eternally to exist in Torments, as we can in reason desire. (a) Justin Martyr speaks of the punishment and torment of the wicked, in everlasting fire, of their interminable torment, their everlasting Torment, and their everlasting feeling, in eternal fire. (b) Irenæus declares over and over again, that the wicked and unjust shall be sent into everlasting fire, that their punishment shall be eternal, and that they shall be damn'd for ever. (c) Theophilus Antiochenus mentions the everlasting punishment, everlasting torment, everlasting fire of the wicked. (d) Tatian speaks expressly of their immortal existing under punishment. (e) Arnobius, tho' he was but a Catechumen, when he wrote his Book, and spoke very imperfectly of several Articles of the Christian Faith, yet speaks very plainly of the everlasting fire of Hell. Nay even Origen himself, (f) however his private judgment might as to this point, which yet was disputed among learned Men, tells us that this was one of the Doctrines of the Church, in his time, that every soul should either enjoy the inheritance of eternal life, or be deliver'd over to eternal fire, and punishments. All which being well consider'd, shall find but very little countenance, from the primi-

a) Ap. 1. p. 41. 46. Ap. 2. p. 57. 64. 71. 87. (b) Iren. l. 1. c. 2. l. 2. c. 3. c. 4. l. 4. c. 47. (c) Ad Autol. p. 79. (d) Tatian. §. 21. (e) Ad Gent. l. 2. (f) Proem. *ὅτι αἱ ψαῖες*.

tive Fathers, for this opinion of the Annihilation of wicked

To what has been said I might farther add, that the Scripture, (in all those places, in which it tells us, that it would have been better for the wicked, *that they had never been born* * and that there shall be degrees in the punishment, of the wicked, and that those of some shall be more tolerable, than those of others,) doth sufficiently intimate that Annihilation, especially immediate Annihilation, after the Day of judgment shall not be the punishment of the wicked. For we all know that there can be no such thing, as degrees, in Annihilation, and that not to be, after we have been, is just the same (neither better nor worse) as not being, before we were born. It is high time to quire this head, upon which I should have insisted so long, as I have, but that I am sensible that the opinion, which I have been refuting, is one of the main engines which the Devil makes use of to deceive Men into ruin, one of the main Comforts and Supports of wicked Men in their wickedness. And evident token this of the great depravedness and wretchedness of Humane Nature, that it make it seek for refuge and Comfort, in the hope of being, when it has the glorious offer of everlasting life and happiness lying before it, and may be as happy for ever, as it is capable of being, if it be not its own fault. I conclude this Head with the words of *Crellius*, § however inconsistent with himself in other places, that *neither doth the Scripture assert, nor reason prove* (I may add, *nor the primitive Fathers allow*,) *that God will Annihilate the Souls of the wicked, after the Day of Judgment.* And so I pass on to enquire.

Secondly, Whither, if the Damn'd shall eternally exist, they shall have no other eternal punishment, than their being out of God and Heaven, and the natural consequences of that, and of their everlasting existence : but shall not more eternally undergo positive Torments. And here I know I have confidently said, that * many of the antient Doctors of the Church doubted, whether the wicked should undergo such a punishment, as should have the sense of intolerable torments with it. But that they really did so, much less, that they

* Matt. 26. 24. Mark 14. 21. Matt. 10 15, Mark 6, 13, Luke 12. 34. § Solut. Problem. tom. 4. p. 533.

* Wolfog. in Matt. 25. 46.

ny ground from Scripture so to do, I am by no means satisfied.

You have just now heard how *Justin Martyr*, and the fore-mentioned Fathers, who are generally quoted, as doubting about the eternity of the positive Torments of the Damn'd, and inclining rather to believe that they will not be eternal have spoken as to this matter. The words which they constantly use, to express the everlasting punishments of the wicked, are the properest words, that could possibly have been chosen to denote positive Torments: as *ἔλλασις*, *τιμαρία*, *ἔλλασις*, all words that signify Chastisements, or corporal punishments, inflicted by Magistrates or Judges. They roundly assert the punishment and torment of the wicked in everlasting fire in unextinguishable fire, which the wicked shall feel everlastingly, &c. and this sure, is everlasting positive Torment, with a vengeance. And this they do frequently, and in those places too, where they are purposely giving an account of the Christian faith, and vindicating it against its Adversaries. And what now if, after all this, they have happen'd to drop an expression or two, which may be capable of being drawn to favour the ceasing of the positive Torments of the damn'd? Ought we not much rather to ascribe this, to excess of good nature, un-accuracy in speaking, some remains of their Heathen Philosophy, an over-warm zeal in opposing some pretended *Platonists*, who seem'd to assert to the Soul a self-existent Immortality: or indeed to any other cause, than such a settled persuasion and judgment about this matter, as must make them so extremely inconsistent with themselves.

But, supposing that these, or any other antient Doctors of the Church, had doubted, as to this point; yet I can see no manner of reason, or ground from Scripture, for us to doubt along with them. The Scriptures indeed tell us, that the wicked shall depart from Christ, that they shall not see God, that they shall not enter into his rest, that they shall not inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. And these are very good proofs that their loss of God and Heaven shall be part of their everlasting punishment, but, by no means, proofs that it shall be the whole of it. For do not the same Scriptures add, that they must depart into everlasting punishment, *ἔλλασις*, a word, as one of the *Socinians* * himself tells us, which properly sig-

* *Wolffog.* in *Matt.* 25. 46.

signifies bodily pain or chastisement? Do not they say, that they shall be tormented for ever and ever, βασανισθησονται, they shall be rack'd and tortur'd, as Malefactors are? Can we make any thing else, than positive Torments, of that everlasting fire into which they shall be cast, and from which the smoke of their torments shall ascend up for ever and ever? Could we our selves have spoken in terms more full, expressive and significant, for this purpose? And, if not, what is it that we can doubt about?

Why truly, when all comes to all, the great objection is that our reason cannot understand, how this can be; that it cannot comprehend how the Damn'd can have any such sort of body, as shall everlastingly subsist in fire, without being consum'd: or at least, that it cannot conceive, how this can be, without a continu'd miracle, or series of miracles, which some Men are very unwilling to allow. But surely it is no great wonder, that revelation should make known such things to us, as we are not able to comprehend the manner of. It is no hard matter to believe that God can do things, which to us finite Creatures, seem very strange and unaccountable. But it is very natural and rational, and easy to believe, that, whatever God has said, that he will do, in some way or other, be it with miracle or without. You have seen that many of the Heathens, who yet had no revelation for this, made no difficulty of believing that the wicked should be everlastingly tormented, by fire, in Hell. And they left it to their Gods to take care, how this was to be done without concerning themselves, about it, or boggling at the belief of it, because they did understand the manner of it. A grievous reproach 'tis to many, who call themselves Christians, and yet dare not trust their God, as far as the Heathens themselves trusted their; who will hardly believe him, tho' he speaks never so plainly, if he speaks of doing things above their comprehension: nor suffer him to work a miracle, even tho' they cannot understand, how his veracity can be salv'd, without it. Certainly, as long as there is no contradiction, as to the doing of any thing, which God has declar'd he will do: as long as such a thing is capable of being done, either in a natural or supernatural way, it highly becomes us, in honour to God, to believe firmly that it will be done.

Farther it is objected, that, altho' it is perfectly at God's pleasure, whether he will ever admit sinners to the enjoyment

of himself and Heaven, yet it seems not to be so, whither he shall inflict everlasting positive Torments upon the Damn'd, or no. The former is matter of favour, and he may dispose of his favours, as he pleaseth: but this latter is matter of Justice; and therefore here God must proceed by the Laws of Justice, which do not seem to allow the *infliction of everlasting positive torments, for temporary sins*. But, this being an objection, which will have its answer, in my followinn Discourse, I shall pass it over here, and proceed.

Thirdly and Lastly, To refute that notion, That not all the damn'd shall be eternally tormented, but that many of them shall, in time, be releas'd from their Torments.

The Heathens, as I before hinted to you, were generally of opinion, that only the most heinous and notorious sinners should continue in Hell. for ever: but that all others, some sooner some latter, in proportion to their respective degrees of guiltiness, should be releas'd from it. To which purpose, *Plato* tells us, in his *Phædo*, that they who have committed great wickednesses, tho' such as may in time be heal'd, must fall into Hell: when they have fall'n into it, and continu'd a year in it, they shall be cast out again, by the rivers of heat or cold: in which they suppos'd they should be tormented.

And the latter Jews have divided Hell into two Parts, the upper and lower Hell: and the upper they appropriate to those, whom they call the *prevaricators of Israel*, that is such as were sinners of a more moderate degree; and they allotted them generally *twelve months* stay there, or more, [*Windet, Sect. 8.*] their sins requir'd it. Thus one of their famous Rabbies tells us, This punishment, saith he, which we have been speaking of, whether it belongs to the body alone, or to the soul alone, or to both body and soul, is different, and varies according to the state and condition of each person respectively. For it cannot be that they, who have done partly good and partly evil, should be tormented with those worst Torments of all, which we have before mention'd. But after a certain time, their punishment shall cease, viz. when that wicked habit of sinning is quite done away, and utterly forgotten, and, according to the opinion of our Doctors of blessed Memory, that will be, without twelve months. Then they shall not only be freed from Torments, but shall ascend to the Mansions of the Blessed, to dwell and take part with them, in their happiness.

And, from the Heathens and Jews together, (*ibid.*) the *Platonians* have feign'd a place, between the extreme Torments

ments of Hell and Paradise, where some sorts of sinners should endure torment, for a time, but not for ever. Those indeed who both believe and practise ill, they give up to eternal torments: but as for those, who believ'd well, tho' they did lead wicked lives, they leave them to the mercy of God, to punish or pardon them, as he shall think fit; but still, with a bare eternal punishment.

And indeed it is no great wonder that the People of the several Religions, which have been long miserably stuff'd with fancies and fables, should give way to such altogether groundless conceits, as these are. But that Christians, whom the wrath of God, has been, so fully and clearly, reveal'd from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men: that they, I say, should give any countenance and entertainment to such pure chimerical Distinctions, as these are, seems very surprizing and unaccountable.

And yet it is well known, that too many Christians have indulg'd themselves, in the belief of such fictions. Even, before St. *Austin's* time, [*De Civit. Dei. l. 21.*] there had been a small variety of opinions about this matter: some have maintain'd, that the Torments of all the damn'd, even the Devils themselves, should have an end, which was suppos'd to have been the opinion of *Origen*: others, that the damn'd of mankind should, in time, get rid of their Torments, and leave the *Devil and his Angels* only, heirs of eternal torments: others again, that, if not all men, yet at least Christians should, after certain periods of time, be releas'd out of Hell: and lastly others, that, to be sure, Christians that were given to works of Charity, however great sinners in other respects, should not undergo everlasting punishment. And each of these opinions they supported, by the Authority of several Texts of Scripture.

I shall have occasion, in my following Discourse, to examine those Texts of Scripture, which are produc'd to prove the general, that the Torments of the damn'd shall not be eternal. At present I shall only take notice of those, which are particularly, in favour of damn'd Christians, and especially such, as had been given to works of Charity, in this life. For this I think my self oblig'd to do, because it is plain that, from the very first preaching of Christianity, there have always been such Christians, as have plac'd a great deal too much hope on the bare name and outward profession of a Christian; and

cause our experience frequently shews us, that many Christians are abundantly too apt to value themselves for their works of Charity, and to act, as if they thought they might commute those with God, for a great many failures, neglects, and transgressions, as to other Duties.

The Texts, which are commonly brought, to prove that Christians shall not be damn'd to all eternity, are these. *Who-so-ever believeth and is baptiz'd shall be saved*, Mark 16. 16. *Who-so eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal Life*, John 6. 54. *If any man's work shall be burn't he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be sav'd; yet so, as by fire*, 1 Cor. 3. 15.

Now, as to the two first of these Texts, it is plain that they can signify nothing at all, to our present purpose. For, if they signify any thing, in favour of the wicked, they signify so much, as must necessarily take away the very foundation of that point, which we are now debating. They must signify, that no wicked Christian shall ever be damn'd at all: and then there is no room for disputing, whether wicked Christians shall be damn'd to all eternity, or no. For surely to be sav'd, and to have eternal life, can never signify to be doom'd to inconceivable Torments, for a considerable time, and then at last to be releas'd from them. But, in truth, these words do not, in the least, favour wicked Christians: it being plain, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that by believing, whenever the promise of Salvation is annex'd to it, is always meant believing so effectually, as to live according to the Rules of the Gospel. And the same may be said of those other words, *eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of God*, that by them is meant, eating and drinking these, with the necessary qualifications of repentance, faith and charity: otherwise, the Scripture it self assures us that instead of *having eternal life, we eat and drink our own damnation*. 1 Cor. 11. 29.

And as to the other Text, it can never be prov'd, that it has any relation at all to the sufferings of the damn'd in Hell. But it seems to be a proverbial form of speech, design'd to represent the difficulty of that Man's Salvation, who mingles un-sound Doctrines, with that great fundamental Doctrine of our Religion, that *Jesus Christ is the Son of God*, or the true Messiah: that such a Man should be sav'd indeed, because of his holding fast the main pillar and ground of truth, tho' with great imperfection; but yet so, as by fire: with great difficulty, like a Man that surrounded with flames, but yet makes a hard shift to escape out

out of them. This, or whatever else, may be the meaning of this obscure Text of Scripture, it seems very plain that the word σωθήσεται, *he shall be sav'd*, cannot be us'd, in any propriety of speech, of him that κατακριθήσεται, *shall be condemn'd or damn'd*; these words being always oppos'd to each other in Scripture, and the former constantly us'd to signify a Man's *not coming into condemnation*, as it is express'd *Joh. 5. 24.* but not his getting out of it, when he has been in it.

But, tho' there is not the least shadow of reason, from Scripture, to believe that Christians, once doom'd to Hell-Torments, shall ever be freed from them: yet there is a great deal of very plain proof, for the contrary. For, besides that all the wicked, as well Christians as others, are there alike sentenc'd to eternal Torments: it is often there declar'd that wicked Christians shall find less favour, at the Day of Judgment, than any other wicked persons: that it will be more tolerable for others, than for them, and that it *would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment deliver'd to them* *Matt. 10. 15. 11. 24. Mar. 6. 11. 2 Pet. 2. 21.* So that if there were ground, from Scripture, to hope, that any of the damn'd should ever be releas'd from their Torments, yet surely wicked Christians, instead of having the best would have the worst title, to this favour, of all the whole company of the damn'd, of the race of mankind. And this, sure with the highest reason: since their sins are committed against a much clearer and fuller knowledge of God's will, under much greater measures of Divine Grace and Assistance, and in opposition and contempt of, much stronger motives and encouragements, much more terrible threatnings, and more inviting rewards than any others ever had.

But it may be thought perhaps, that the case of those damn'd Christians who have been *given to works of Charity*, may be more hopeful than that of others. And truly, were there any hope at all, in either of the cases, I could easily admit that the first would be the more hopeful of the two. For the Texts of Scripture, which are produc'd on behalf of this, are much more specious, than those, which are produc'd on behalf of the other. *Blessed are the merciful, saith our Lord himself, for they shall obtain mercy: If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you your trespasses: Matt. 5. 7. 6.* And St James seems plainly to intimate, that only those

have judgment without mercy, that have shew'd no mercy. Jam. 2. 14. In our Saviour's own description of the Day of Judgment, we find nothing enquir'd after, nothing rewarded or punish'd, but Men's *charitableness* or *uncharitableness*: Matt. 24. and the great crime, for which the Rich Man, in the Gospel seems to have been doom'd to Hell, was his *uncharitableness* to poor Lazarus. Luk. 16. 20, &c. And surely, from all these put together, we may fairly collect, that such wicked Christians as have been given to works of Charity, shall have a much milder sentence pass'd upon them, at the Day of Judgment, than any others.

Now, in answer, to this, several things may be said, as

First, That the Charity of wicked Christians is not true Christian Charity, doth not flow from those principles of an hearty love to God and our blessed Saviour, a regard to their examples and commands, and an earnest desire to please them and become like to them, which are absolutely necessary to make our Charity truly Christian: and consequently that theirs is not the Charity, to which the promises of the fore-mention'd Texts belong. Or

Secondly, That these Texts, if they do relate to the Charity of wicked Christians, such as it is, will rather prove that they shall not be damn'd at all, than that, being once damn'd, they shall ever be releas'd from their damnation. But this is pretended to. Nor indeed, if it were, could it be of any force against the whole Tenor of Scripture, which so plainly assures us, that no particular grace or virtue, nothing but universal Holiness, shall save us from Hell: and against many places of it, which threaten eternal damnation upon such, as are guilty of any wilful habits of this or that particular sin: however, in some other respects, of innocent or even commendable behaviour. Or

Lastly, That whatever favour God may be pleas'd to shew damn'd Christians, upon account of their Charity, it will be in the intenseness, and not the duration, of their torments: mitigating that, but not this. For it is certain that the Scripture never takes the least notice, of any distinction that shall be made, as to the duration of the Torments of the damn'd: but on the contrary, expressly tells us that, at the Day of Judgment, the whole company of the wicked, all that are plac'd on our Saviour's left hand, shall alike be sentenc'd to everlasting fire, alike go away into everlasting punishment. It does sufficiently intimate and prove to us, that there shall be

be distinctions made, as to the interceness of the Torments of the damn'd: telling us that it shall be more tolerable for some than others, nay and that the distinctions shall be so great, that some shall have a portion, double to that of others: and that all shall have torment and sorrow in proportion to their having *glorifi'd themselves and liv'd deliciously*, be it more or less. Rev. 18. 6.

And this consideration, of the difference of the intenseness of the Torments of the damn'd, is a plain answer to that Objection, which is frequently made against the Torments of all the damn'd being eternal, that if they shall be eternal, they will be all equal. Equal indeed they will be, as their duration, but vastly unequal, as much as the strictest Justice can possibly require, as to their intenseness.

And thus, I hope, I have refuted those false meanings, which Socinians and others give us, of the Eternity of Hell-Torments and of several of those Texts of Scripture, upon which we build our belief of it. From what I have had occasion to say for this purpose, I think it will be no hard matter.

Secondly, To shew and establish the true meaning. And that, in short, I take to be this: viz. that all the wicked shall everlastingly exist in Hell, and there, besides their everlasting loss of God and Heaven, and the everlasting grief, anguish and torment, naturally consequent upon that and their everlasting existence, everlastingly undergo the positive Torments of Hell-fire, and of all other inflictions, which the divine vengeance shall think fit to lay upon them. As, to give you a short proof of all this out of Scripture.

There shall be a resurrection both of the just, and the unjust: they that have done evil shall come forth, to the resurrection of condemnation, of eternal condemnation: Act. 24. 15. Which condemnation shall be, John 5. 29. not only their departing from Christ, Heb. 6. 2. their not entering into God's rest, but their going into everlasting punishment, into everlasting fire, Matt. 25. 46. where they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever where their worm dyeth not, and their fire is not quenched: Heb. 3. 18. 19. where is the blackness of darkness, for ever; Rev. 11. 20. 10. where the Devil and his Angels are held in everlasting chains: Mar. 9. 44. where those that are filthy, must be filthy for ever. Jud. 14. 6. where the wrath of God abideth on them: Rev. 22. 14. 10, 11. where they shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation.

ignation : where they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone : and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever : and they have no rest day nor night.

Thus terrible an eternity of wo is there reserv'd for the wicked in another life. And, to add more to the terribleness of this wo ; its very eternity is a plain proof that it shall be, without the least intermission or relaxation. For it is not the nature of eternal things, to rest for a while, or abate : but they keep constantly going on, without ceasing or diminishing, with the same equal vigour and intenseness, for ever and ever.

Some good natur'd Christians, I know, have fancy'd that there shall be some times of rest and refreshment, for the damn'd. But alas ! what signifies fancies, against the natures of things themselves, and against plain Texts of Scripture, shewing us to the contrary, that the damn'd shall not have the favour so much as of one drop of water, to cool their Tongues, shall not have the least rest, the least cessation or relaxation of their Torments, day or night, for ever and ever.

As therefore we love our selves, our souls and bodies, let us not support our selves, in a course of sinning, with the pitiful and false hopes of not being, or being miserable only for a time, or to this or that degree. But let us seriously set our selves, to bring forth fruits meet for repentance, and, by so doing, render our selves acceptable in his sight, who has the keys of hell, and who alone can save us from falling into it. Rev. 1. 3. 9. 6. For let us be assur'd that, when we are once in it, we may seek for death, but shall not find it, we may desire to dye, but death shall flee from us ; we shall then be separated unto evil, And the Lord will not spare, but his anger and his jealousy will smoke against us, and all the curses, written in his book will lye upon us. Deut. 21. 22.

The Objections, against the Eternity of Hell-Torments, Answer'd.

S E R M O N VII.

MATTH. 25. 41.

Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

T Here remains yet one thing to be done, in relation to the subject, which I am now upon, *viz.* the eternity of Hell-Torments: and that is, to answer the material objections against it. And they, I think, are three.

First, That there are several Texts of Scripture, which prove that God will not lay everlasting punishments, or torments, upon Sinners.

Secondly, That it is cruel and unjust, to punish temporal sins with eternal torments, and therefore we may be sure that God will not do it.

Lastly, That, tho' it should be allow'd that God has plainly threatened eternal punishments, yet he is not oblig'd rigorously to make good his threatnings, but may mitigate, recede from, them, as far as he pleaseth: and that, therefore we cannot certainly infer from them, that sinners shall be eternally punish'd.

First, That there are several Texts of Scripture, which prove that God will not lay everlasting punishments, or torments, upon sinners. This was pretended as long ago, before St. *Jerom's* time, who in his Comments upon the Chapter of *Isaiah*, gives us an account of some of the Texts that had been produc'd, for this purpose. And, that should have been pretended, is no great wonder: especially

those early times of Christianity, when Men's respect for the Holy Scriptures was so great, that it was in vain to offer to set up any new Opinions, without, some appearance at least of countenance from Scripture. But that there should really be any good ground from thence, to believe that the torments of the damned shall not be eternal, notwithstanding those many plain Texts of Scripture, which so expressly assert that they shall, is utterly strange and inconceivable.

However, let us look a little upon these Texts of Scripture, which are pretended to prove this point, and then we shall soon be able to judge, whither they really do so or no. Now the Texts which are commonly urg'd for this end, are these which follow. *My Spirit shall not always strive with man,* Gen. 6. 3. *Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clear gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* Ps. 79. 7, 8, 9. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plentious in mercy. He will always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever.* Ps. 103. 9. *Hot coals shall fall upon them, thou shalt cast them into the fire: they shall not subsist in their miseries.* Ps. 140. 10. According to the Translation of the vulgar Latin. *O Lord I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turn'd away, and thou comfortest me.* Isai. 12. 1. *And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days they shall be visited.* Isai. 22. *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always angry: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.* Isai. 57. 16. *I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinn'd against him, until he plead my cause and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall be as his righteousness. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity; and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.* Isai. 7. 9. 18. *These shall receive a longer judgment, or damnation.* Mark 12. 40. According to the Translation of the vulgar Latin. *God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.* Rom. 11. 32. *And death and hell shall cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.* Rev. 14.

Now, not to enter upon a particular discussion of every one of these Texts, which would run out into much too great

great a length, for my present discourse: I shall content myself, with making a general observation or two upon them.
As

First, That it cannot be prov'd that any one of the Texts alludg'd out of the old Testament, has any manner of relation to the subject, which we are now upon, viz. *Hell-Torments*. One of them, that seems to bid fairest for this, *Pf. 110.* *Hot coals shall fall upon them, thou shalt cast them into the fire, they shall not subsist in their miseries,* is plainly a mistranslation of the original words, which ought to have been translated thus, *Hot coals shall fall upon them, or let hot coals fall upon them, he shall, or let him, cast them into the fire: into deep pits, that they may not rise up again.* And thus restor'd to their true Translation, if they did at all relate to *Hell-Torments*, they would rather prove the eternity of them, than the contrariety for not to rise up again, out of the fire, out of the deep pits, must certainly signify everlastingly to continue in them. Accordingly some Expositors (*v. Pol. in loc.*) do make these words to be a prediction or imprecation of the fire of *Hell*, that everlasting fire, out of which none shall ever rise up, upon the Psalmist's Enemies. But this seems to be too harsh a sense, and besides is not generally approv'd of by Commentators, who take these words to be only a denuntiation or imprecation of some very severe temporal Judgment in this Life (such as that of raining fire and brimstone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* to which many suppose the Psalmist here refers) but not to relate to the judgment of the other.

In like manner, all the rest of the Texts, when we come to compare them with their contexts, will be found to belong more naturally a great deal, to the judgments of God against Sinners in this Life, than to their Torments in the next: as are commonly adjudg'd to do so, by Expositors. As to the first instance in one for all; and that seemingly the likeliest of all to relate to the future punishments of the wicked. *I will contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit shall fail before me, and the souls which I have made, Isai. 57. 16.* Translated, consider'd, as it stands by it self, looks plausibly enough against the eternity of *Hell-Torments*; but then consider'd, as it stands in the middle of a Prophecy relating to the temporal restoration of the Jewish Church and Nation as is plain from the context. just before, where mention is made of possessing the land, and inheriting God's holy mountain: it must, in

son, be understood of God's removing his temporal Judgments from his People, that so they might not be quite weary'd, and perish under them. And in this sense, much the greatest part of Commentators understand them.

But it will be said, (*v. Pol. in loc.*) if this be so, to what purpose did the opposers of the eternity of Hell-Torments produce these Texts? Could they hope to support their cause, by Texts so apparently nothing relating to it? I answer, that, in the primitive times of Christianity, they probably enough might have had some hope of this; because nothing was more common then, and that too amongst the Learnedest of the Christians, than to apply, and admit of Texts of Scripture, in any sense that, upon a general view, they seem'd applicable of; without nicely inquiring into the circumstances of the context, which were the most likely means to lead them, to the true understanding of those Texts. Accordingly we frequently find Texts apply'd to subjects, which they have no manner of relation to: and, which is the greatest unhappiness, all, very great stress sometimes laid upon these misapply'd Texts, and that too in relation to subjects of the highest importance. But,

secondly, I observe that these Texts, out of the Old Testament, of which it is at least doubtful, very doubtful, whether they relate at all to Hell-Torments or no, are set in opposition to Texts of the other side, out of the New, which, beyond all doubt, do relate to them. Texts taken out of places, loosely treating of them, particularly describing them: Texts expressing our Saviour's own Words concerning them; containing in them the very words of that sentence, by which the wicked shall be doom'd to everlasting fire, and the execution of that sentence.

As to the Texts produc'd out of the New Testament against the eternity of Hell-Torments: I observe that the first of them, *These shall receive a longer damnation*, Mark 40. is falsely rendred by the vulgar Latin: and should be translated, *these shall receive a greater, or more abundant damnation*; *μαρὶς ἡ ἐκείνης*, which are the Original words. And translated, they are evidently nothing to the purpose of the eternity of Hell-Torments. I having before shew'd you, the difference, that shall be in these, shall be, not in their duration, but intenseness.

The next Text, *Rem. 11. 32.* *God hath concluded them in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all,* plainly relates the mercy of God, in bringing both *Jews* and *Gentiles* to belief of the Gospel, as appears from the Context: and therefore signifieth nothing, as to the Torments of the Damn'd.

As little to the purpose is the last Text, *Revel. 20.* *And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.* For by Hell there we are to understand the state of separate souls, as it is well known the original word signifies; which separate state shall be no more (after the Day of Judgment, of which the Apostle was there speaking, when all Souls shall be reunited to their proper Bodies) but shall be swallow'd up, together with death, in the lake of fire and brimstone. And thus the best Commentators understand these words. But to suppose that by *Hades* here we are to understand Hell, as it signifieth the place and state of the damn'd, would be to make nonsense of the Apostle's Words. For, at this rate, they must mean that Hell should be cast into a part of it self, as the lake of fire is acknowledg'd to be. Besides that, by giving Hell to this second death, (*App. ad Leviath. p. 335.*) *Hobbs*, who urgeth these words as an argument against the eternity of Hell-Torments, would not have his end: since, I have prov'd, in my former discourse, this Pharise second death signifies a state of Torments, and that too as lasting as Immortality it self. So that he would only throw away Hell, which he is so willing to have lost, into another Hell, which he would be just as unwilling to find: and what would he get by that? Tho' indeed, if he would throw away Hell immediately upon or after the Day of Judgment, as he might do, if he throws it away by virtue of this Text, he cannot be fairer, than to throw it away into another Hell, just as he does as it self, that so God's enemies may not escape his vengeance just then, when one would expect it should begin to take an everlasting hold of them.

Upon the whole: We have not so much as one Text, of the New Testament, where one might most reasonably hope to find evidence, as to any thing belonging to our future State, which doth in the least tend to invalidate our belief of the eternity of Hell-Torments. And those which are brought, out of the Old Testament, for this purpose, are either mistranslated, or misapply'd, or even contrary to

any purpose, which they are brought for. Whereas, on the other side, the Texts, which are alledg'd in proof of the eternity of Hell-Torments, are, almost all, taken out of the New Testament, are plainly to the purpose, and do as fully and expressly assert what they are brought for, as can be desir'd. That, I think, there cannot possibly be need of any farther arguing about this case, but we may safely leave Men to judge, on what has been already said, on which side the truth lies. I shall therefore proceed to answer what is objected.

Secondly, That it is cruel and unjust to punish temporary with eternal Torments : and therefore we may be sure God will not do it. So saith *Wolffgenius* upon the 25th St. Matthew and the 46th ver. *Those, the wicked shall go, and shall have everlasting punishment; as God is most exactly just in all his judgments, so here we may be sure he will not inflict upon any sinner a punishment greater than his deserts. But there can be no sins so heinous, as to equal to eternal torments.* And indeed, allowing the premises to be true, the conclusion is certain. God cannot do a cruel or unjust thing, therefore, if to punish Sinners with eternal Torments be cruel and unjust, undoubtedly he will not do it. I say torments, and by those I mean punitive torments inflicted by God, such as that of Hell fire, and not such, as are the natural consequences of our loss of Heaven, and of our own acquir'd evil habit of sin, and our eternal existence under these. For a great many Men make a wide difference, as to these two : and tho' they readily allow, that it is not to be expected, that God should alter the natural course of things, as he must do, to prevent the latter ; yet they can by no means allow it to be consistent with his Goodness and Justice, to inflict the former.

I have already said several things, in a former discourse, wherein I consider'd the Arguments drawn from Reason, for and against the Eternity of Hell-Torments, which, I think, may serve as an answer to this objection. As

Text, 1st, That it is not look'd upon to be cruel and unjust in Men, to inflict the most lasting punishments, which they are able, upon some great and notorious offenders. It is thought necessary, for the support of human Governments, that the supreme Power in them should have a right over the duration of Men's lives, which is all of their beings, so that their Government can extend to : that so it may, as oc-

caſion requires, not only for habitual offences, but for ſingle acts of very heinous Crimes, inflict perpetual baniſhment, imprisonment, nay or even perpetual poſitive Torments, perpetual labouring in the Mines, at the Gallies, or the like. And can we poſſibly then be ſo fooliſh as to think that God has not as much right, to inflict ſuch puniſhments upon thoſe that offend him, as are plainly neceſſary for keeping up his Authority, and his Government of the World, as we Men have, to maintain our Authority and Government over one another? And does not every days experience convince us, that a right of inflicting eternal Puniſhments is abſolutely neceſſary, for this purpoſe? Leſs than this, we are ſure, would not do: becauſe even this it ſelf will not do, with the greater part of mankind. So that, if it were poſſible, ſomething more, rather than leſs, than eternal Torments, ought ſtill to be threaten'd.

If it be ſaid, that Men are conſenting to that power, which human Governments exerciſe over the whole duration of their lives: and that therefore they can have no wrong done them by the exerciſe of it upon them; but that they are not ſo conſenting to God's right of inflicting eternal Torments upon Sinners. I answer, that God has no need of their conſent in this point: for his Creation muſt have given him an abſolute right to all ſuch power over his Creatures, as is neceſſary to make them his faithful Worſhippers and Servants, as I have before ſhew'd this, of inflicting eternal Torments to be.

And, whereas ſome Men will be apt to ſay farther, that it doth indeed ſeem neceſſary, that God ſhould threaten Sinners, with eternal Torments, but that it does not ſeem neceſſary that God ſhould have a right actually to inflict them. I answer, that it is too mean and unworthy a thing to be poſſ'd of God, that he ſhould threaten any thing, which he has not a right to inflict: and moreover, that this bare ſuppoſition, that God has not a right to inflict what he threatens, muſt neceſſarily hinder the force and efficacy of his threatenings.

Secondly, That the demerits of a ſinful life, are ſo, beyond all conception, great: that it is impoſſible that any puniſhment can be too great for it. To live, for a long while, in an habitual neglect and contempt of the Sovereign Lord, Creator and Governor of the World; to ſpend a whole, or great part of it, in deſying Infinite Power, in diſparaging

finite Wisdom, in despising Infinite Goodness, in hating Infinite Perfection; to have no Gratitude, for the greatest of Benefactors, no Duty for the most Rightful of Governours, no Honour for the most Glorious of Potentates, no awe for the most Tremendous of Majesties; in one word, to be continually affronting and provoking every Person, of the Blessed Trinity: to despise the Riches of God's Goodness, in sending his Son into the World to seek and to save us, instead of letting him lead us to repentance: to trample under Foot the Son of God, and to count his Blood of the Covenant, wherewith we are Sanctify'd, an unholy Thing: to do despite unto the Spirit of Grace, and to turn a deaf Ear towards him, and to grieve him, when he stands at the Door and knocketh; to say all at once, to refuse eternal Happiness, to fly from every thing that is good, and to choose and pursue every thing that is Evil; what is all this put together, but such a prodigious Mass of Sin and Folly, such an intolerable Complication of every thing, that is most offensive and provoking to God, as no punishment can be too great, no torments endure too long, for?

Lastly, That Sinners do, purely thro' their own fault, and in direct opposition to many gracious means us'd by God to prevent this, render themselves proper Objects of God's everlasting Wrath; by wilfully contracting such sinful Habits, in this life, as they were plainly forewarn'd, would bring them under a necessity of continuing everlasting Sinners, in the next Life. And if, notwithstanding all these merciful Warnings and Endeavours of the divine Goodness to the contrary, they should still obstinately go on in their Sins, and at last dye in them, and by so doing, wilfully subject themselves to this necessity, of continuing everlastingly unjust and everlastingly filthy, and consequently proper Objects of God's everlasting Wrath; can they have any Reason to complain of God, for inflicting his everlasting Wrath and Vengeance upon them, who have thus wilfully made themselves the proper object of it?

I shall only add two Considerations more, which alone, I think, might be sufficient to conclude us, upon this Head.

First, That since God has so plainly reveal'd that the Torments of the Damn'd shall be Eternal, this is a much clearer, and stronger Argument, that it is not cruel and unjust in God to make them so; than it is, on the other side, that he has

not reveal'd that they shall be Eternal, because it seems to be Cruel and Unjust in God, so to make them. We are much better Judges of what God has plainly reveal'd, than we are of what is Just and fit for him to do, in punishing his Creatures: and therefore, methinks, we ought in all Modesty to turn that Objection, which is now before us, into an Answer to it self. God say some Men, cannot justly punish temporary Sins, with eternal Torments, therefore we are sure that he has not reveal'd that he will do so. God, say we on the other side, has plainly reveal'd that he will punish Sinners, with eternal Torments, therefore we are sure that it cannot be unjust in him so to do. This I take to be much the surest side of the Argument, because the Ground, which we proceed upon in this, is much surer, than that, upon which we proceed on the other. We cannot easily be mistaken in judging whither a Revelation be plain or no: but we may very easily be mistaken, in judging what is just or unjust, fit or unfit, for God to do, in relation to his Creatures.

Secondly, That, taking eternal Misery and eternal Happiness, as they are join'd together in the New Testament, I cannot but think that, if God had left it perfectly to our own choice, whither we would accept of them or no, thus join'd we should have accepted of them: and if so, we can have no Reason to call that cruel and unjust in God, which, if we had had full power of choosing or refusing, we should rather have chosen, than refus'd. Eternal Misery, perhaps you'll say, is a most terrible thing, to run any, the least, hazard of; but not eternal Happiness as desirable, on the other side, as that is terrible? And, if so, what reason can there possibly be, for refusing an eternity of happiness, which we may make sure of, if we please, for fear of an eternity of misery, which we may as surely avoid, if we please? I make no doubt but Men would have lik'd the happiness, without the hazard of the misery, much better: but, since that could not be had both together seem to me much more eligible, than no happiness at all.

And thus much may serve to prove, that it is not cruel and unjust in God, to inflict eternal Torments upon sinners.

proceed to the
Last Objection, viz. that, tho' it should be allow'd that God has plainly threaten'd eternal punishment, yet he is not oblig'd rigorously to make good his threatnings, but may mitigate or

cede from them, as far as he pleaseth : and that therefore
 We cannot certainly infer from them, that sinners shall be eter-
 nally punish'd. So saith Mr. Hobbs, *We cannot prove, from the*
justice of God, which has threaten'd eternal torments upon sinners,
that their torments will really be eternal. For although he is unjust,
who doth not perform the good, which he owes to any one; neverthe-
less he who doth not execute the evils or harms, which he has
threatned, is not unjust, but merciful. (a) How much less shall God,
who is infinitely merciful, be accounted unjust, for mitigating ei-
ther the lastingness, or intenseness of our deserv'd punishments?
 And, long before Mr. Hobbs Evnomius and his followers
 us'd to talk much at the same rate, or rather worse; viz.,
 That the torments of hell would not really be, but were only
 threatned, to make men afraid. And accordingly we frequently
 St. Chrysostom inveighing against some, in his time, who
 were wont to say, that (c) God's threatnings of eternal torments,
 are only vain words, which should never be accomplish'd; that
 he is gracious and merciful, and that none of these things will
 ever pass, but that God only threatens them, to make us humble and
 (d).

our own; so that this Objection you see has been of a very long
 standing; has often been in the Mouths of Men, and probably
 can have been oftner in their Hearts: and moreover, it has been carry'd
 as to make, not only the Eternity of Hell-Torments, but
 Hell itself, of little, or no force.

It is high time therefore to take this Objection to task: and
 too, so much the rather, because we find how ready Men
 are, to infer, that, if God may thus recede from these threat-
 ings, he certainly will do so. Let him not be ty'd up from
 by his Veracity, Unchangeableness and Justice, and they
 presently believe and hope, that his Mercy will do all,
 it may do.

But what a strange and unreasonable way of arguing is this,
 as to the Premises and the Conclusion? It is far from be-
 plain that God has left himself at liberty, to recede from
 threatnings, in this case; and much farther, that, if he
 he will think it fit to use this Liberty, in favour of Sinners.

(a) *Append. ad Levit. p. 335.* (b) *Zonar. ad Can. 1. Conc. Constant.*

(c) *Chrysost. Homil. 8. in 1. Thes.* (d) *Hom. 25. 32. in Epist.*

That God is not oblig'd to make good all his Threatnings, readily grant : because the Scripture it self assures us, that his Threatnings of temporal Judgments are very often conditional and consequently, if the condition, upon which they are suspended, intervenes, he ought not to proceed to Execution. Nay I will not say that in all other Cases, except these in which God himself has told us there is a condition suppos'd, God is oblig'd rigorously to execute his Threatnings. But then, on the other hand, it is acknowledg'd by all, that some of God's Threatnings are absolute and immutable. Such are all those which he has confirm'd by an Oath, which the Apostle in the *Hebrews* tells us, is an immutable thing, in which it is impossible for God to lye. And accordingly Divines are generally agreed, that the wicked shall never enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, because God has sworn, that they shall never enter into his rest; not only that earthly rest, which he had provided for his People in the Land of *Canaan*, but into the heavenly rest, which remaineth for the People of God, of which the rest in the Land of *Canaan* was but a Type and Shadow.

The great thing therefore which we are to enquire after is of which of these two sorts the threatnings of Eternal-Torment are, whether absolute or conditional. And truly to me it seems very plain that God design'd them to be absolute. For, though it doth not appear that he has any where confirm'd them by an Oath, yet it appears that he has done so much for the Confirmation, as is at least equal to an Oath, and therefore ought in all reason, to be suppos'd to render them as immutable as an Oath it self would have done. He has sent his only begotten Son into World, to be the revealer of this his Wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men. He made him the Preacher of a Fire for the wicked, that never shall be quench'd. He made him himself, whom he hath appointed to be our Judge, to describe the Day of Judgment, and to give us an Account beforehand of the very Sentence, which shall then be pronounc'd upon the Wicked, commanding them to depart into everlasting Fire; and of the immediate Execution that shall follow this Sentence: They shall go away into everlasting Punishment. And could the Oath of God it self have given a more solemn Confirmation to his Threatnings, than all this has done? Can we think that God sent his Son, only to speak big, but vain, Words? That our Judge himself frighten us with a Sentence, that shall never be Executed? Nay,

that he foretold the certain Execution of it, which yet, we ourselves shall find, shall never come to pass? Certainly it was not in the Power of God himself to have given a more Sacred ratification to his threatnings, than he has this way done. His Son himself has been the Mediator of the Covenant between him and Mankind, he has seal'd the truth of his threatnings, as well as of his promises, with his Blood; and who then shall dare to say they are not absolute? Oh, how did that Holy Father St. Chrysostom, break out into the utmost anger and indignation, against those of his time, who question'd the certain accomplishment of these our Saviour's threatnings? And are these then only words, saith he? *Is not the Rich Man, that despis'd Lazarus really punish'd? Are not the foolish Virgins rejected, by the Bridegroom? Do not they, who regarded not our Saviour, depart into the Fire prepar'd for the Devil and his Angels? Shall not he, that had not on a Wedding Garment, be bound hand and foot, and cast out into utter darkness? Is not he, who demanded the hundred Pence of his fellow Servant, deliver'd to the Tormentors? Is not that true, which was said concerning the Harlots, that their worm shall not die, and their fire shall never be quench'd? Are these only threatnings? So you say indeed; but how dare you to say so, in a matter of this vast moment? How dare you, of your own head, to determine these things thus? Since I my self am able, as well from what Christ said, as what he did, to manifest the quite contrary.*

Let us not then deceive our selves any longer, with that general shelter from threatnings, that these do not pass over a night, like promises, and therefore may be receded from. For, how true soever this may be in the general, it will do us no manner of Service, in this particular case before us. Here God and his Son have in so solemn a manner engag'd themselves, for the actual execution of their threatnings, that sure, if ever any threatnings, were absolute, these must be so. * *However therefore God may defer the execution of temporal Evils, his Truth and Veracity is concern'd to inflict eternal punishments, upon unrepentant Sinners.*

But, supposing that there were a Condition reserv'd in these threatnings, yet what can this condition be, but such an one, as Sinners shall never be able to perform? And consequently this will be just the same, as if there were no condition reserv'd at all. I have shew'd you, in a former discourse, that we can-

* Arch-Bishop Tillotson, *Serm. of the Truth of God.* p. 361.

not conceive any other conditions, upon which the damn'd can hope ever to get rid of the guilt of their Sins, and to be reconcil'd to God, than satisfaction, or repentance, and that both these the damn'd are incapable of. And what then necessarily follows, as Bp. *Stillingsfleet* expresseth it, but that where the only conditions imply'd in these threatnings are wanting, these Hypothetical Comminations become absolute predictions, of what shall certainly come to pass, on all those who are destitute of the conditions suppos'd in them? (Orig. Sac. p. 131.)

Nay, and since we are supposing, let us suppose, even the very utmost that these Men can desire, that God is perfectly free to recede from these threatnings, without any condition, just as he himself pleases. Yet what shadow of reason can Sinners have to hope, that God will ever thus recede, for their sakes? I know, their great hope is in his Mercy. But is not God's mercy always directed by his Wisdom, and agreeable to his Holiness, Justice, and Honour? And will not these always plead more strongly for the punishing of Sinners, than the other for not punishing, or releasing them from punishment? Is not God always the same unchangeable God? And is not his unchangeableness matter of great terror to wicked Men?

* *Let but the Sinner consider, as Arch-Bp. Tillotson admirably expresseth it, what God is, and the consideration of his unchangeable nature must needs terrify him. He is a Holy God, and of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. Hab. 1. 12. He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness neither shall evil dwell with him, the foolish shall not stand in his sight, he hateth all workers of Iniquity. Psal. 5. 4. 5. He is likewise a just God, and will by no means clear the guilty, nor let sin go unpunish'd. Exod. 34. 7. He is also omnipotent, and able to execute the Vengeance threaten'd against Sinners. Who knoweth the power of thine anger. Psal. 90. 11. Thou, even thou, art to be fear'd, and who may stand in thy sight when thou art angry. Psal. 76. 7. strong is the Lord God who judgeth. Revel. 18. 8. And which gives a sad accent to all this, he that is thus Holy and Just and Powerful continues for ever the same, and will never alter or put off any of these properties, will never cease to hate iniquity, and to be an implacable enemy to all impenitent Sinners; and is it not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of this Holy and Just Omnipotent God who lives for ever, and can punish for ever? Let all obstinate Sinners*

hear this and tremble; you cannot be more obstinately bent to continue in your wicked ways, than God is peremptorily resolv'd to make you miserable. If you be determin'd upon a sinful course, God is also determin'd how he will deal with you, that he will not spare but that his anger and jealousy shall smoke against you, and that all the curses that are written in his Book shall light upon you, and that he will blot out your name from under Heaven.

In vain then do Sinners comfort themselves, with the hope of God's not being oblig'd rigorously to make good his threatnings of eternal Torments. It seems most probable, that he is oblig'd himself to do this. Or, if he has not, but has reserv'd to himself some conditions, which if the damn'd shall ever be able to perform, they may then hope for his mercy, and release from their Torments: Yet we are utterly at a loss to find out any such conditions, as it could be proper for God to reserve, which the damn'd shall ever be capable of performing. Nay, if God be at perfect liberty, even without any condition, to recede, as far as ever, he pleaseth, from these threatnings, yet still there is abundantly more reason to believe, that he will not in the least recede, than that he will. And where then is the hope of the wicked, in this case?

And thus I have gone through this great and important subject of Hell Torment: And, I hope, have said enough upon it, if not to satisfy Mens curiosity; yet, which is much better, to satisfy their reason, and confirm their belief, and excite their fears, and quicken their diligence in working out their salvation; which are the great ends, which we are to aim at in all our Discourses, upon this, and such like subjects. It is indeed a very grievous consideration, to think how willing Men are to deceive and impose upon themselves, by superficial and false reasonings, in a case of such infinite concernment, as this is. But let not them be more ready to deceive themselves, than we, whose duty it is to watch over them for their good, shall be to undeceive them. The Terrors of the Lord are so proper a Topick to perswade Men, that we cannot insist too much upon them, or too much upon them. And, whither Men will hear, whither they will forbear, we are to be instant, in season, out of season, in warning them to consider, at their utmost, what the end of those Men will be, who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; when the Lord Jesus shall be reveal'd in Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance of them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord

Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. 1 Pet. 4. 17. 2 Thess. 7. 8. 9.

I cannot shut up this important subject better, than with a most pathetical Exhortation of that Pious Father, * St. Chrysostom, in relation to Hell-Torments. Oh madness! Oh stupid and brutal folly, saith he, to love Pleasure and sin so well, as to be uneasy under the thoughts of these things. Hence come all our odd opinions about them: And were we but once resolv'd to become truly virtuous, we should soon believe, without the least doubting, that there is such a place as Hell. But where. you will say, is this Hell to be? Alas? What does that concern thee? Our great business is to enquire, whether it shall really be or no, not where will be the particular place of its situation. Let us not therefore spend our time in enquiring where it is, but rather in enquiring how we may avoid it. Nor let us disbelieve future punishments, because God does not punish all Sinners in this Life: For God is merciful and long suffering, and therefore threatens, but doth not immediately execute his threatnings. I have no pleasure, saith God, in the Death of a Sinner; but this very saying is a proof, that there is such a thing as the Death of a Sinner: otherwise it would be superfluous. I know that nothing is more unpleasant to you, than such discourses as these, but to me nothing is more pleasant. And I heartily wish, that at dinner, at supper, in all places and conversations, we would accustom our selves, to discourse concerning Hell: For then we should never be too much griev'd with the Calamities, nor taken with the Pleasures of this Life: For what is Poverty, Sickness, Captivity, Blindness, to the Torments of Hell? To be starved with Famine, to be blind from our Youth, to be forced to beg our Bread, what is all this? Even not worth speaking of, if compar'd with the miseries of that place. Let us then be continually discoursing about these things, and our thus keeping up the remembrance of Hell, in our Minds, will prevent our falling into it. But, perhaps you'll say, we grant that there is an Hell: but then it is only for Unbelievers. But, pray, tell me, why so? Is it because believers have own'd their Lord? But what good will this do them? For if they lead Wicked Lives, they shall suffer greater Punishments, than Unbelievers. That Servants who knew their Lord's will, but did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. Why then dost thou jest, in serious matters? Why dost thou deceive thy self, and destroy thy Soul, by false reasonings? Why dost thou

* Homil. 31. in Ep. ad Rom.

Suppose the goodness of God, who has prepar'd and threatned Hell for
 this very end, that we, being made better by the fears of it, may
 not fall into it? He therefore that hinders our discoursing about this,
 doth, in effect, force and thrust us into it. Do not therefore weaken
 the hands of those, that labour for Vertue, nor sooth the laziness of those,
 who are, as it were, a sleep in their Sins: For if Men are once per-
 swaded, that there is no such place as Hell, when will they ever quit
 their Sins? Let us therefore forbear this ridiculous way of proceeding,
 and stop the Mouths of all such, as speak against Hell: For there will
 be a strict enquiry, after our good and bad deeds, nay, even after
 the very smallest of them. Unchast Looks, idle Words, simple Re-
 proaches, evil desires, Drunkenness, &c. must all be accounted for
 and punish'd. How then do you dare to say that God, who is so exact,
 Searcher and Tryer of our Lives, has only threatned Hell, but that
 there is really no such thing? Do not, I beseech you do not, destroy
 your self, and all that shall be perswaded by you, by such vain hopes.
 If you will not believe us, ask the Jews, the Greeks, all sorts of
 Hereticks; and they will all, with one mouth, make answer, that
 there shall be a future Judgment; and state of Retribution: Or, if
 the evidence of Men be not sufficient, ask the very Devils themselves,
 and you shall hear them crying out, Why art thou come to tor-
 ment us, before our time? Wherefore, putting all these things
 together, perswade your selves not to trifle any longer, least you should
 at last convinc'd by experience, that there is an Hell. But learn
 hence to be sober, that so thou mayest both avoid the Torments
 of that place, and obtain the Happiness of Heaven. Thro' the Grace
 and Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ: To whom, with the Fa-
 ther and the Holy Spirit, be all Honour, Power, and Glory,
 ever and ever. Amen.

The Nature and Blessedness of Poverty of Spirit.

S E R M O N V I I I.

M A T T H. 5. 3.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

THUS doth; that Divine Preacher of Righteousness Christ Jesus begin, that best of Sermons that ever was or ever will be preach'd in this World, his Sermon on the Mount. He had just before enter'd upon his Prophetical Office of revealing and expounding to Men the will of God, as we read in the 17th verse of the foregoing Chapter, *from that time began Jesus to preach.* And behold ! no sooner had he undertaken this important Office, but he dischargeth it to a miracle, *speaking so as never Man,* Job. 7. 46 before him spake, and comprizing in few words more than all the wise Men of old had amass'd together, in their vast Volumes of Philosophy.

Having withdrawn himself from the noise and tumult of the multitude, which flock'd to him from all parts about Jerusalem, Matt. 4. 25. he retires to a private Mountain, and there instructs his Disciples, and in them all Christians that should ever come into the World, in a short, but sure, way to true and everlasting Happiness.

But, instead of propounding such ways to Happiness, as were agreeable to those notions which Mankind had of it, he goes a quite contrary way to work, and pronounceth that to be the direct road to happiness, which both Jews and Gentiles look'd upon, just on the contrary, as the certain road to misery. But so it was, *the wisdom of this world was foolishness with God:* 2 Cor. 3. 19. What Men thought their happiness, was indeed their greatest misery ; and those things which they avoided, as the main hindrances of their Happiness, were the only means, by which it could be obtained.

The

irit.

Their high thoughts and great desires, their Mirth and jollity, their freedom from pain and trouble, in which they placed so considerable a part of their happiness, must now be chang'd into *poverty of spirit, weeping and mourning, afflictions and persecution*; Ver. 3, 4, 10, 11. or else, divine Wisdom it self has declar'd, they cannot be truly happy.

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Now that this Doctrine, which was not like to take much with a sensual World, might not be wholly slighted and neglected, our Saviour wisely sets a Blessing before it: well knowing how fond Men naturally are of any thing that looks like happiness, and how likely they would be to give entertainment to his Doctrine, if not for its own, yet for the Blessings like. Nay, he recommends it, by annexing to it the very greatest of Blessings even nothing less than, the kingdom of heaven it self.

The first thing necessary, in order to our obtaining this Evangelical Happiness, is *poverty of spirit*; for this our Lord himself placeth first, beginning his Sermon with these words my Text, *Blessed are the poor in spirit*.

What this *poverty of spirit* is, which our Blessed Lord had such great esteem, that he thought it not to much thus to signify it with the first place amongst his *Beatitudes*, is a little disputed by Learned Men. Some taking the word poor to be us'd here, in a borrow'd and metaphorical sense, to signify the humble and lowly Man; others earnestly contending for the strict and proper sense of it, as it signifieth an indigent, needy person, one who is destitute of Riches, and in mean circumstances, as to his outward condition in this World, If we take the word poor in the first sense, then to be *poor in spirit*, or in mind (for so we are to understand the word Spirit here, and in many other places of Scripture) is to be *meek and lowly in heart, not proud in spirit*, as the wise Man ex-presseth it, not *high minded or self-conceited*. Eccles. 7. 8. If in the other sense, then to be poor in Spirit, is to be willing to undergo all the hardships and inconveniencies of Poverty, to have a mind that will stoop to our condition, how low soever it is, and patiently and contentedly acquiesce in it. There is a third sense likewise, which some Men give to this Grace of *poverty of spirit*; taking it to be that disposition of Mind, which is opposite to Anger; (and that chiefly, because the word *spirit* is sometimes used in Scripture, to signify *Anger*) and this sense seeming more properly to belong to meekness,

which is recommended to us by our Saviour, at the 5th ver of this Chapter, I shall not insist upon it here, but content myself with the two other senses of *poverty of spirit*, which I have before given.

And both these senses have such very fair Reasons, as well as great Authorities, to support them, that I shall not take upon me at present to determine in favour of either: but shall make choice of the former only for the subject of my following discourse, and consider *poverty of spirit* no farther, than as it signifies a very mean and low opinion of our selves, and of every thing that may properly be call'd our. And, in considering it under this notion. I shall endeavour.

First, To describe to you the Man, who may be truly said to be *poor in spirit*.

Secondly, To shew for what Reasons our Saviour gave the Grace of *poverty of spirit* the preeminence of all other Christian Graces, and assign'd the first place and Blessing to it.

Thirdly, I shall make use of several motives, and more especially that glorious one offer'd in my Text, to persuade Men to use their utmost endeavours, for the obtaining of this gracious Disposition of Mind. And

Fourthly and *Lastly*, I shall conclude all, with a short address to three sorts of persons, who seem more especially to want this Grace of *poverty of spirit*.

First then, He may be truly said to be *poor in spirit*, who constantly bears in mind, that he is a Creature; that he receiv'd his very Being, together with all the endowments and ornaments of it, from God, and is continually oblig'd to him for his preservation of them, and for all manner of good things that befall him. That whatever external or internal excellencies he may be possess'd of above others (whither *Wealth, Beauty, High Birth, Wit, Judgment, Good nature*, or the like) they are all the *free gifts of Providence*: that he has no propriety in them, no just claim or title to them, and therefore that it highly becometh him, having thus receiv'd them from another, neither to make his boasts of them, nor value himself upon them, as if he had not receiv'd them. 1 Cor. 7. That he is a finite Creature, circumscrib'd within narrow bounds and limits, which he cannot exceed, that the eyes of his Understanding are dim, his Faculties weak, and his Power short. Nay farther yet, that, in that fall'n State, into which his Forefathers sin has degraded him, he is become a very imperfect

perfect Creature, and extremely apt to run into errors and mistakes, even about those things, which do fall within the compass of his nature.

Who is possess'd with a deep and lowly sense of the miserable condition, which he is in by nature; who seriously considers that he was conceiv'd in sin, *Pf. 51. 5.* and brought forth in iniquity; that he is by nature an enemy to God, and a child of wrath, so horribly vitiated and deprav'd, *Rom. 5. 10.* that, when he himself consider'd, *Ephes. 2. 3.* he is utterly incapable of doing any good thing. *2 Cor. 3. 5.* or so much as thinking any good thought; *Phil. 3. 13.* that whatever is good or commendable, *Jam. 1. 13, 14, 15.* either in his thoughts or his performances, is more God's than his, but whatsoever is bad is wholly and solely his own: and therefore that the Glory of the good ought to be ascrib'd to God, and the shame of the bad to himself. Who most sincerely believeth and thankfully acknowledged, *Rom. 3. 24.* that it is by Grace that he is sav'd, and that Eternal Happiness, which he hopes for, after death in another Life, is by no means a debt to his merit. *Ephes. 5. 8.* but the free and undeserv'd Gift of his most compassionate and bountiful Father towards him. *Rom. 6. 23.* Who, as to himself in particular, being conscious of his own many frailties and imperfection, fallings and infirmities, will Transgressions and presumptuous Sins, is always ready to put out with S. Paul, under a mortifying sense of his own unworthiness, that he is *less than the least of all Saints*: *Eph. 3. 8.* he is apt to have a very mean opinion of his own attainments in piety and vertue, to thing them much short of what he ought to be, much short of what many others have attained to. (And this is what St. Paul means, in other places of his Epistles, by thinking soberly of our selves, *as we ought to do*, *Rom. 12. 3.* and *in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than our selves*.) *Phil. 2. 3.* Who distrusts his own Judgment, which has so often deceiv'd him: is fearful of following his own Will too rashly, which has so often led him out of the way: and is extremely jealous of his Passions and Affections, which have so often hurry'd him into sin and folly. Who is always suspicious of himself, and not only willing, but desirous, both to hear and follow the advice of others: whose judgment he can easily be perswaded to set a greater value upon than upon his own.

To be short; Who, knowing himself to be a very vain and foolish Creature, is contented to be thought so by other people, can patiently hear himself disparag'd, and is as vile and contemptible in his own eyes, as he ought in any reason to be, in the eyes of other Men. To say all at once: Who seriously considers that *every Man at his best state, is altogether vanity*; and that he *himself is vanity of vanities*. Ps. 39. 5.

This is a true, tho' a very imperfect, Character of the Man that is *poor in spirit*: and, from this Character of him, will be no hard matter to shew,

Secondly, For what reasons our Saviour gave this Grace of poverty of spirit the preeminence of all other Christians Graces, and assign'd the first place and blessing to it, And that I think, he might very well do, for these following.

First, Because *humbleness of mind, or poverty of spirit*, is the foundation of all Religion. Religion is nothing else, but an entire resignation of our selves to the will of God, in all things: a perfect submission to his Laws, and an awful adoration of his Being. And there is nothing, which I know that can oblige Men to this, but a modest and humble sense of the infinite distance that there is between God and them, and of their entire reliance and dependance upon him. If they are not very well satisfy'd, that they were at first the *work of his hands*, and are now continually sustain'd by his Providence, that they are wholly subject to his government and disposal, and lyable to be rewarded or punish'd by him, when and how he shall think fit, we shall find it a very hard matter to persuade them, either to obey or worship him. But, if once they are truly possess'd with this mean and low, this poor and mortifying opinion of themselves, their obedient will naturally follow their humility: and their sense of their own insufficiency will soon put them upon, imploring the assistance, and acknowledging the goodness of him, from whom all their sufficiency must be deriv'd. And therefore our blessed Lord, like a wise Master Builder, began here, and made choice of this for the head-stone of the corner, upon which, he knew, he might afterwards easily raise a fair and steady Fabrick of Virtue and Religion. He laid this Law first, saith St. Chrysostom, *as a strong and sure foundation, upon which he might afterwards build, whatever else he should think fit*. Chrysost. in loc.

Secondly, Because this was an excellent preparative, for the reception and entertainment of Christianity; and that, upon these two accounts;

First, As it serv'd to remove those prejudices, which both *Jews* and *Gentiles* had preconceiv'd, against the person and doctrine of our Saviour. He knew very well that he should make another sort of figure in the World than the *Jews*, thro' wrong interpretation of their Prophets, expected from their *Messiah*; and that the maxims of his Doctrine would be, in great measures, directly opposite to all the Maxims of the *Gentile* wisdom: and that, for these reasons, he should become *to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks, 1 Cor. 1. 23.* Gentiles, foolishness. And therefore he begins his Prophetical Office, with admonishing Men to be modest and humble, meek and lowly, and to entertain but poor and mean opinions of themselves: that so, by this means, he might, if possible, keep them from becoming stiff and obstinate in their prejudices, and incline them, upon a modest and humble sense of the frailties and imperfections of their Natures, the blindness and uncertainty of their Judgments, and their liability to Errours and mistakes, at least to believe it possible, that they might have been in the wrong, and to try whether he was the right, or no. Wisely considering that, till pride and conceit were taken out of the way, there could be no room for that Doctrine, which was to prove all the wisdom of this world to be meer foolishness. And accordingly, we find, it was opened in the Event: very few of the *Jews* embracing the Gospel, because it came not attended with that outward Pomp and Granduer, *1 Cor. 1.* which they expected, and had fix'd their hearts upon; and hardly any of the more learned among the *Heathen* submitting to it, at first, but rather mocking and deriding it, because it preach'd new things to them, who were only conceited that they knew all things, and *destroy'd their wisdom, Acts 17. 18, 19.* who thought themselves the only wise Men, and *brought to nothing their understanding, 1 Cor. 1.* who had long pass'd in the World, for the Masters of wisdom.

Secondly, As it serv'd to convince Men of their spiritual poverty and wants, and consequently inclin'd them to hearken to Christ, who came with offers of a large and liberal supply to them. The conceited Man is so full always of the advantages and perfections of his own condition, that he is very apt to think it incapable of being better'd, and is so far from acknowledging, that he laughs at, those who kindly profer to assist and mend it. With the Church of *Laodicea*, he saith that he

is rich and has need of nothing, and knoweth not that he is wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Revel. 3. 17. And just thus was it with the *Jews*, who were so extravagantly puffed up with the conceit of the perfection of those Privileges and Advantages, which they enjoy'd under the *Mosaic Dispensation*, that they contemn'd and rejected our Saviour, *Joh. 9. 34.* with a scornful *Dost thou teach us?* When nevertheless the advantages, which he offer'd them, were really as much more excellent than those which they had from the Law of *Moses*, as a substance is than its shadow, as spiritual things than carnal, and as temporal things than eternal. Inasmuch, that the Law is said to have had no glory, in respect of the glory of the Gospel, *2 Cor. 3. 10.* which so far excelleth it. And well had it been for the *Jews*, if they could have been made sensible of this, and if the mistaken fancy of the perfection of the state which they were then under, had not hindered them from going on, as our blessed Lord earnestly exhorted them, and shew'd them the true way, to real perfection.

But now the case of the humble Man is quite otherwise: he is always deeply conscious of his own poverty and insufficiency, wretchedness and misery, and most earnestly desirous to embrace and improve all opportunities of amending and bettering his condition.

To the humble then, and to them alone, Our Lord foresees his offers of new Light, Grace and Salvation, would be acceptable and welcome: and therefore, being desirous that Men should partake of these, his first care was to prepare and qualify the Minds of all Men for them. He reminds them of their own poverty, that so they might the more thankfully accept the riches of his goodness: of their own darkness and obscurity, that so they might *rejoyce in his marvellous light*: of their own inability to help and save themselves, that so they might become *exceeding glad of his Salvation*.

Thirdly, Because this Grace of Poverty of Spirit being once firmly settled and rooted in the minds of Men, would not only dispose them to receive Christ for their Saviour, but would likewise afterwards be a constant spur to their endeavours, and mightily quicken their Attention, Care and Diligence, both in learning and obeying all his future Commandes. Every wise Teacher is especially careful, at the beginning of his Instructions, to instil some such general Principles into the minds of his Disciples, as may be of universal use and influence, in the

whole sequel of them. And of this nature is humility, in the school of Christianity; which, teaching us not to be high-minded, but to fear, and, when we stand most upright, to take heed lest we fall, makes us pass watchfully and cautiously through all the stages of our *Christian warfare*, improve all opportunities of growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure.

Lastly, Because it was the want of this *poverty of spirit*, that was the occasion of Sins first entring into the World. The worlds, I might have said: since that above, as well as this below, was first defil'd, and basely stain'd by pride. Never could those once all glorious Beings, the fall'n Angels, who are now eternally condemn'd and chain'd to Hell, have entertain'd much as the least thought of rebelling against God, had they first cast off all sober sense of their own condition, and only conceited that they might become, what in the nature of things was impossible, like the most High. *Isai. 14. 14.* And never could unhappy Man have lost his innocency, had he been careful to preserve his humility. But it was the Devil's policy, first to rob him of this, and then of that: first to puff him up with pride, and to make him believe that he need not fear God, *Gen. 3. 4, 5.* but might himself be as God, and then to make him guilty of the foulest ingratitude and most fatal rebellion against him. When therefore our blessed Saviour was about to enter into a new, and better Covenant with Man: that he might not forfeit his Title to this, as he had done to the former, he bid him in the first place to beware of Pride: consider seriously with himself, how many and how great evils this had already brought in upon him, and, considering this, to be so wise and cautious, as not to split twice upon the same Rock. Since *Pride*, saith St. Chrysostom, had been the source and spring of all our mischiefs, our Saviour here first recommends Humility to his Disciples, as the best preservative against all such evils for the future. Chrysost. in loc.

These are some of those reasons, which probably might induce our Saviour to set so great a value as he did, upon this *poverty of spirit*. And these all plainly tend to convince us of the great usefulness and excellency, nay, indeed of the absolute necessity, of this Grace; it being so evident that, where this obtains, their Piety and Vertue, there our Duty, and with that our true and everlasting Interest, must naturally

ly thrive and prosper : and on the contrary, that where ever this is wanting, their Ingratitude and Rebellion become bold and daring, the Devil *tempts* and *prevails*, *sin is brought forth* and *sin*, being *finish'd*, *bringeth forth death*. 1 Jam. 15. I shall need therefore, surely, to spend but very little time.

Thirdly, In making use of several Motives, and more especially that glorious one offer'd in my Text, to perswade Men to use their utmost endeavours, for the obtaining of this gracious disposition of Mind. And

First, Let us consider the great reasonableness of this Duty of humbleness of mind : which requires us to think of God, our Neighbours, and our selves, no otherwise, than as is exactly agreeable to our respective natures and conditions. Is not God infinitely above us ? Did he not create us ? Doth he not continually sustain and preserve us ? May not he do what he will with his own ? Is he not *Lord of Heaven and Earth* : and may he not therefore fulfil all his will in both ? May he not call his own Creatures to account, for obeying or disobeying his will, and reward or punish them accordingly ? Nay, has he not expressly told us that he will do this ? And what then can possibly be more reasonable, than to think and believe all this of him, and so habitually to think and believe it too, that it may have its due influence upon our whole Lives and conversation ?

Do not many of our Neighbours appear to be much better than we our selves are ? can we possibly know their faults, as well as we do our own ? Do we not find a great many Arguments within our selves, to beat down our high opinion of ourselves, which we cannot equally find, to lessen our good opinion of our Neighbours ? And is it not then most just and equitable, that we should often in honour prefer our Neighbours to our selves, Rom. 12 10. and never, without the most apparent reason, prefer our selves to them ?

As to our selves : Are we not Creatures ? Are we not Sinners ? Have not all, even the very best of us, great failings and imperfections ? Are we not, in our selves considered, wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked ? And are not these considerations enough, to humble and abase us to the utmost ? Can we think that *pride was made for Man* Ecclef. 10. 18. Shall *sinful dust and ashes* dare to be proud ? Isai. 64. 6 Are the *filthy rags of our righteousness* fit to be gloried in ? Much more, can we think it reasonable to glory in our shame ? No certainly : to the very best of us rather belonging

re ever confusion of face : Phil. 3. 19. because we have sinned against the Lord our God, and have not obey'd his voice, to walk in the laws, which he set before us. Dan. 9. 7, 8, 9, 10.

I shall Secondly, The example of our blessed Saviour, and the more than ordinary earnestness, with which he commands us to endeavour after this Grace, ought mightily to recommend it to us. How carefully did he, who had the greatest reason, that ever Man had or can have, to think well of himself: because he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; 1 Pet. 2. 21. how carefully did he, I say, prove himself to the World, to be meek and lowly in heart: Mat. 11. 29. and avoid every the least appearance of pride and self conceit; refusing even so much as the appellation of good, lest he should seem to have too high an esteem of himself, and to incroach too much upon the divine perfections and Glory? How did his constant endeavours to shun the praise of Men, Mat. 19. 17. and his industrious ascribing all the Glory, that was offer'd him, to God: how did the meanness of his whole life, how did the pain and ignominy of his death, Phil. 2. 5, 6, 7, 8. which he sustain'd with so much patience, contentedness, and entire resignation to the will of God, set him forth as bright and most perfect pattern of humbleness of mind? And did he not leave us his example, for this very purpose, that we might follow his steps? 1 Pet. 2. 21, 23, 24. Has he not himself call'd upon us, to learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart? Did he not most severely check all lofty and aspiring thoughts, in his Disciples? Did he not encourage, to the utmost, all modest and humble ones? Luk. 2. 26. 9. 48. Was not poverty of spirit his first Lesson to 'em; Matt. 23. 12. Was it not his continual Topic, in all his Discourses with them? Has he not declar'd it one of the prime Qualifications, for his Kingdom? And how then can we ever do so much, for the attainment for it?

Lastly, The beneficial fruits, and advantages both Temporal and Spiritual, of this Grace, must needs wonderfully commend and endear it to us. As will sufficiently appear, from barely mentioning some of the chief of them. As

First, That this Grace is the foundation of all Worldly contentment. The great reason why Men are at any time dissatisfied with their worldly Condition is, because they think they deserve much better of Providence, or at least, that they are not so well us'd by it, as their Neighbours, who, their vanity makes them apt to think, are not, by much, so deserving as them-

themselves. Whereas alas ! had Men but once attain'd to a true sense and judgment of themselves, had they but once learn'd to *think soberly of themselves, as they ought to think*: they would soon acknowledge the worst state of Life to be too good for them, and not only be contented with, but even rejoyce in and be thankful for, the very least of all God's Mercies: as well knowing them, how little soever, to be still beyond their deserts, still too good for such vile and sinful Creatures, as they are.

Secondly, This Grace will be sure to procure us the esteem and love of all Men. It will make us willing to stoop to all, even the lowest offices of Friendship and Charity: thankful for all, even the smallest Acts of kindness and civility: and extremely courteous, obliging and condescending, to all persons of whatsoever Rank or Fortune. It will teach us to give place and preference to others; it will not suffer an haughty spirit of opposition and contradiction to reign amongst us: but it will so sweetly influence and qualify our whole Conversation and Deportment towards Men, and render our Behaviour so affable, pleasing and useful, in all instances: that we shall no sooner be known, than we shall be admir'd, no faster get acquaintance, than friendship and respect. So far is Humility from degrading any Man, as some who were never acquainted with it pretend, that, let our Condition be never so nigh, this will still raise it to an higher pitch. *Before Honour is Humility*, saith Solomon, and again, *Honour shall uphold the humble in spirit*. Prov. 18. 12. 29. 23. But, which is more, infinitely more, valuable,

Thirdly, This will, in a most peculiar manner, recommend us to the favour and love of God: who has taken frequent occasions in Scripture, to shew how great a value he sets upon this Grace, and how dear the possessours of it are to him. *God shall save the humble person*, saith Eliphaz to Job: *He forgetteth not the cry of the humble, but heareth their desire*. Job 22. 29. *The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way*, saith the Psalmist, Ps. 9. 12. 10. 17. 25. 9. *He giveth grace to the humble*, saith St. James, Jam. 4. 6. Nay, such an entire lover is he of them, that he declares, by his Prophet Isaiah, that he will dwell with him, that is of an humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one. Isai. 57. 15. If then, the hope of gaining the love of Men will not much move us; yet surely the hope of gaining the

love of God must. It must, I say, if we have but so much as one spark of humility remaining in us: for this will be sufficient to make us sensible, what vile and contemptible Creatures we are, in our selves consider'd, and how much and how continually we stand in need of the divine Favour and assistance, and consequently, this will most strongly incite and provoke us, to use our utmost endeavours for the obtaining of this humbleness of mind, which is a sure and ready way to entitle us to them.

Fourthly, This will be a safeguard and preservative, promoter and encourager, of all Goodness and Vertue, in us. By increasing in us an inward awe and dread of God (whom it will shew us to be our Almighty Governour and Judge) and, with these, a true Religious fear of offending and incensing his most terrible Majesty. By making us distrustful and suspicious of our selves, of our own ability, skill and care, and, for this reason, more than ordinarily diligent, discreet, and watchful, in all the Duties of our Christian Life. And lastly, by obtaining for us, from the Throne of Grace, which the humble are encourag'd to approach with boldness, such a large and sufficient measure of Grace, as will effectually enable us, so to *fight the good fight of Faith*, and to *finish our course*, that, in the end, we shall not fail of obtaining everlasting Life. Which is the.

Fifth, and *last* Motive that I shall at present make use of, to excite your earnest desires and endeavours, after this Grace of *Poverty of Spirit*. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*, saith my Text, *for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*; even that Kingdom of *everlasting bliss and Glory*, which God has prepar'd for all his faithful Servants, *from the foundation of the World*. Mat. 5. 34.

Not, that Heaven will be the reward of this particular Grace of Humility, in it self consider'd, but consider'd, as attended with all those Graces and Vertues, which naturally flow from it, and are sustain'd by it: consider'd, as it is the parent of an universal Submission and Obedience to God, the fruitful seed of all Religion, and the foundation and perfection of all Virtue.

'Tis true indeed, by the Kingdom of Heaven here we may understand, the Kingdom of the *Messiah*, or the Church of Christ here on Earth: *Mat. 1. 2.* and if so, then blessing here promis'd amounts to this; that the *poor in Spirit* are those,

of

of whom Christ's Kingdom must be compos'd, that they alone are of a fit temper and disposition, to constitute his Church here on Earth. But, in which soever of these senses we take it, it will come in the end much to one; since the very same tempter of mind, which makes us meet to be partakers of Christ's Grace here, will make us meet to be partakers of his Glory hereafter: the very same happy frame and disposition of Soul, which fits us to be Members of his Church militant on Earth, will equally fit us to be Members of that Triumphant in Heaven. And who then would not be humble, when his humility shall lift him up as high as Heaven? Who would not be thus abas'd, to be thus exalted? Who would not be thus cloth'd with humility, to be thus cloth'd with everlasting Glory?

And now, having thus fairly represented to you the great and manifold advantages of this grace of Poverty of Spirit, I could hardly allow my self to think so ill of mankind, as that there should be any want of it among them: did not our too common experience, and more particularly three sorts of Men, whom I have now in my view, sadly convince me to the contrary. Give me leave then, in Charity, to speak a word to each of these, and I have done.

The first sort are those, who are continually bragging of their own Righteousness; and lessening and despising other Men, as neither meet for, nor enjoying, so large a portion of God's Grace, nor yet making so good an use of what they do enjoy, as themselves. Like the haughty Pharisee, they are apt to thank God, that *they are not as other Men*: Luk. 18. 11. and like those conceited wretches, mention'd by the Prophet *Isaiah*, to say to their Neighbours *stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*. Isai. 65. 5. But surely, so far are these Men from having any thing of a true Christian Spirit in them, that they seem not so much as, to understand, what it means. So far are they from being, as they too often vainly boast, sure of their election, that they plainly want one of the surest marks of it. Our blessed Lord has told us, that his Kingdom must be compos'd of none but such as, like himself, are meek and lowly in heart: that those who exalt themselves, *Matt. 23. 12.* shall be abas'd, and those, and those only, who abase themselves, exalted. Luk. 18. 14. And therefore I cannot help fearing, that many of those presumptuous persons, who make such a noise and bustle here about their Righteousness,

and boast themselves, as if they had Salvation written upon their foreheads by the finger of God himself, will go away, at the last Day, from the great Tribunal, unjustify'd: when the poor humble Soul, who has made it the great business of his Life to *work out his salvation with fear and trembling*, Phil. 2. 12. and has been abundantly more ready to disparage, than to commend himself, shall receive that blessed commendation from God himself, *Well done thou good and faithful servant*: Mat. 25. 21. and together with it, the glorious Reward of his well-doing, *Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord*.

A second sort are those, who fancy their own performances meritorious, and in themselves, without the promise of God, *deserving eternal Life*; insomuch, that God would not be just to them, if, for the sake of their good Works, he should not bestow eternal Life upon them. And surely, if there be such a thing as Spiritual Pride in the World, this is it. For what can we possibly conceive more abominably presumptuous, impudent and assuming, than for poor miserable Sinners, unable of themselves so much as to do or think any good thing, and always guilty of so much imperfection, even in their very best Services, yet still, to conceit their Services to be of worth enough to purchase Heaven? Has not our blessed Lord himself told us, that, *when we have done all these things which were commanded us*, Luke 17. 10. we are still to think our selves *unprofitable servants, and to have done no more, than it was our duty to do*. O let us then, at our utmost peril beware of puffing up our selves with great thoughts of the merit of our own performances: least, by so doing, we provoke God to withdraw his Grace from us, and to try us by the merits of them; and then we shall soon find our mistake, when it will be too late to correct it, in everlasting misery.

Lastly, There is a third sort of Men still behind, no less foolish or dangerous than either of the former, and they are those, who (either out of a mistaken notion of the force and extent of the powers and faculties of Humane nature, in general, or out of an over fond opinion of the extraordinary subtlety and deep reach of their own, in particular) are apt to grow high-minded, and to exercise themselves in matters, which are too high for them. To arraign a God of infinite perfection, before the Bar of finite Reason, for ill contrivance and male administration, in his Creation and Government of the World: to interpret all the Dispensations of Providence,

dence, and make them bear just such meanings as best sute with their humours or interests : and to unlock the Secrets of all Mysteries, tho' never so abstruse and hidden, or to reject the belief of them, because they cannot, &c. Alas vain Man! Who art thou, as it is elegantly express'd in the book of *Job*, *that enjoynest to God his way*, *Job. 36. 23.* or dar'st say unto him, *Thou hast wrought iniquity?* Who art thou, *that darknest the counsel of the Most High, by thy words without knowledge?* *38. 2.* Once more, Who art thou, that vainly conceitest thy self able to search those deep things of God, which he himself tells us, *no one knoweth, but his own spirit?* *1 Cor. 2. 10, 11.* Lay aside thy conceit, thou foolish, little Creature, and be contented at present with thy condition, to see through a glass darkly : and then it will not be long ere, as a Reward of thy modesty and humility, *1 Cor. 13. 12* thou shalt be taken up into a bright and glorious place where thou shalt see God face to face, without any cloud between, and shalt know him, even as thou also art known by him.

To which happy place God, of his infinite mercy, brings us all, for the sake of his dear Son *Jesus Christ*.

Worldly Men wiser, in their way, than Christians, in theirs.

SERMON IX.

St. Luke 16. 8. the latter part of the verse
For the Children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the Children of light.

AT the beginning of this Chapter, from the first verse to the ninth, we have the Parable of the unjust Steward briefly represented to us, in the following manner. ' A certain rich Man, finding his Steward guilty of

waiting

wasting his goods, commands him to bring in his Accounts, that so he might reckon with him, and dismiss him of his Service. Whereupon, the Steward presently begins to forecast within himself, what was likely to become of him, and by what means he might be best able to provide, for his future subsistence and well being. Labour it seems, was not for his purpose, dig he could not : and to get a Livelyhood by begging, was beneath him, to beg he was ashamed. When therefore, after much thinking, he could fix upon no other way, he at last resolves upon this, to try to make himself Friends of his Lord's Debtors, that so, when he should be turn'd out of his Service, they might receive him into their houses. And accordingly, he immediately calls them unto him, and makes up his Lord's Accounts with them : but, in so easy and favourable a manner as he knew, would very much incline and oblige them, to be kind and helpful to him afterwards. For, instead of exacting the utmost of their Debts, he abates one a fifth part, another a full half, and the like proportion, in all probability, to all the rest. Which when his Lord discover'd : altho' he could not but be angry with him, for dealing so ungratefully and unjustly by him, yet, at the same time, he could not forbear commending him, for taking such good care, and making such wise provision, for himself. *And the Lord commended the just Steward, for his injustice, but because he had done wisely, φρονιμῶς, like one that had his thoughts or wits about him.*

From this whole Parable, thus related, our blessed Saviour takes occasion to make this Inference in my Text, That the *Children of this world*, those, who chiefly give themselves up to this World and the things of it, *are wiser in, or for, their generation*, [Εἰς τὴν γενεάν] act more prudently in their way, in relation to their worldly Concerns, *than the Children of light*, than those who, by the light of the Gospel, have been taught much better things, have been instructed in a sense of religion, and an eternal future State of Happiness or Misery, profess that they believe the truth of, obligations to, and necessity of providing for, them, do, in relation to their affairs, the great and momentous business of their Profession. Accordingly, I shall consider these words at present, only as they depend upon the Parable, and, in so doing,

First, I shall enquire what extraordinary instances of providence our Saviour might probably observe, in the unjust *Steward's* conduct of himself, which are rarely to be found among the *Children of light*, in the management of their Affairs, and are therefore a sufficient ground for, and justification of, this his observation.

Secondly, I shall examine from what Causes it can possibly come to pass, that the *Children of this World* should act more prudently, in relation to the things of this World, than the *Children of light* do, in relation to those of the other.

Thirdly, I shall shew that, altho' the *Children of this world* are wiser, in their generation, than the *children of light*, yet they are far from being absolutely and truly wise.

Lastly, I shall conclude all, with a few words of exhortation, both to the *children of this world*, and the *children of light*.

First, I am to enquire what extraordinary instances of providence our Saviour might probably observe, in the unjust *Steward's* conduct of himself, which are rarely to be found among the *Children of light*, in the management of their Affairs, and are therefore a sufficient ground for, and justification of, this his observation. And here I think, without the least straining of the Parable, we may fairly insist upon these two general Instances, under which we shall find a great many particular ones comprehended :

First, His provident concern, thoughtfulness and care, for the future.

Secondly, His making a true and wise use of Money.

First, His provident concern, thoughtfulness and care, for the future. No sooner did he find himself disappointed of the hopes, which probably he had entertain'd, of spending his whole Life, all the futurity which he had any notion of, in his Lord's service and favour : but he immediately began to look forward, and to lay new projects and designs, for his comfortable subsistence in the remaining part of his days, which now, contrary to his expectations, were to be afresh provided for. *My Lord*, saith he, *taketh away from me the stewardship* : as if he had said ; the hopes, which I once had, of taking up my rest in my Lord's house, and spending the remainder of my days there, with ease and comfort, are now quite vanish'd ; I am commanded to be gone, thrust naked out of those doors, where I once thought I had laid up gold for many years, and all those fair promises, which I had made

my self, of future Happiness, are come to nothing. *What then*
all I do? I know not how long I may live : but I would
 willingly live comfortably all my days. Were my life now to
 have an end, my cares might have one too : but, since that
 may last, I would fain have my Happiness, last with it ; for
 who can bear the thoughts of living, when Life it self shall
 be a burthen and a torment ? Yet this at present is my case :
 I may have a long stock of Life behind, but can foresee no-
 thing, but shame and misery, to attend it. My days it may
 be many, alas ! too many, since they are so likely
 to be evil. This cuts me to my heart : this wounds my Soul,
 and makes me dread the very thoughts of living. Something
 then I must do, some foundation of future Happiness I must
 lay : that so, having a reasonable prospect of Happiness, as
 long as I have any prospect of being, I may live now without
 fear, and, from the seeds of Ease and Comfort sown at pre-
 sent, reap a plentiful and cheerful Crop hereafter. Nay, and
 since I seem to have different degrees of Happiness in my
 power, why should I not aim at the highest ? Why should I
 be contented to think only of getting a bare Livelyhood by
 labour or begging, when I have an opportunity in my hands
 of providing amply and comfortably for my self, by securing
 my interest, in all my Lord's Debtors ?
 Such were his thoughts, and such his resolution : not only
 of Happiness, but the very greatest happiness, which he could
 think himself capable of obtaining, he made his supreme end.
 And, because he knew that resolving to be happy would not,
 of itself, be sufficient to make him so, he therefore stops not
 there : but immediately proceeds to that, which would, *viz.*
 searching out, and putting in execution, such means, as
 were most fit and proper for the attainment of his end. And
 here he acts with Judgment, and with courage. His judg-
 ment distinguisheth for him, betwixt such means as were likely
 to attain his end, and such as were not, and makes him reject
 the one, and embrace the other. It was not at all likely, that he
 who had so long liv'd an easy life, and in the most creditable
 manner among his Lord's Servants, should make any great mat-
 ter of either of labouring or begging : and therefore he presently
 lays over all thoughts of these. But nothing could be more
 likely than that he, who perfectly well knew his Lord's Deb-
 ts, and probably enough had often try'd before, how far
 they might be tamper'd with, in the way which he now thought
 I on,

on. should bring his ends about by them; and therefore he
 he fixeth his thoughts and resolutions. His courage keeps
 his Spirits, under the difficulties and disappointments, wh
 he at first met with, in his search after proper means, for
 attainments of his end. And what, tho' labour and beggin
 which came first into his mind, would not answer his purpo
 yet still he plucks up a good heart, and believes there is som
 thing else that will. And, upon this belief, he goes on
 dauntedly and unweariedly, to find out what this somethi
 else should be. A third time therefore he sets himself to thi
 ing, and resolving never to be baffled and give over, n
 hardly so much as allowing himself any respite, till he had fou
 out that which he search'd for; till he had secur'd to hi
 a comfortable prospect of being made easy and happy, after
 should be dismiss'd his Lord's Service.

And now, having in his thoughts mark'd out the way,
 his desired end, he stays not long, before he put his Theo
 into practice: but instantly makes towards the happin
 which he has now in view: and, by a vigorous and seasonab
 prosecution of those means, which he had found would le
 him to it, soon brings himself within the blessed influences
 it: soon changes his black fears of misery into bright hop
 of happiness, and his dread of life into a love and des
 of it.

And what, I beseech you, could possibly have been mo
 agreeable to all the rules of true wisdom, in his way, that
 upon his Notions and Suppositions, than such a behaviour
 this, was? For, since all Men naturally desire future, as w
 as present, happiness, and are apt to be uneasy and unsatisf
 in their minds, till they have obtain'd, at least, a rational ho
 of such and happiness, as shall run commensurate with the
 beings; and, since the attainment of such an hope is the mo
 just and noble, and ought to be the principal, aim of all o
 Thoughts and Resolutions, and is very much within the
 power of them; who can sufficiently commend our unj
 Steward, for directing all his thoughts and enquires, this way
 For making an happiness as extensive as his being, as
 thought, the supreme object of all his Projects and Com
 trivances: the center, which they all tended to, and met in.

'Tis true indeed, he unhappily mistook, as to his notion
 the extent of his being: but he acted as wisely, as a Ma
 could do, upon this mistaken notion, and therefore, tho' m
 absolute

plutely wise, yet was *wise in his generation*, which is all we, at present, contend for. Supposing, as he did, that the whole happiness of our beings consists of, and terminates in the good things of this World, he could not possibly take a wiser Resolution, than he did, that he would find out the way or other, of becoming master of a competent share of them.

And, since the greater the happiness, so much the better and more desirable: was it not a truly laudable greatness of mind in him, that would not let him sit down contented with a moderate degree of happiness, when he had reason to think, that there was a greater and more noble degree of it, within reach: but put him upon aspiring earnestly after the greater? And, when he had thus made the greatest happiness, which he could hope for, his supreme end: must not every body applaud him, for his immediate Application of himself, to find out the proper and ready way to it? Must not every body speak well of his undaunted Resolution, and unwearied diligence, in his search after this way? For what can become of a Man more, than to loose no time, when he is in pursuit of happiness? When will we count it wisdom to exert all our Judgment, industry and courage, if not then, when we are about securing to our selves a plain and certain Path to Happiness, for ever?

And then, what greater instance of his wisdom could we have, than his hastning, with all possible speed, to put those means, which he found most likely to obtain his desired end, into Execution? Had he wholly omitted this: the other two instances of his wisdom would have come to nothing. For what signifieth our resolving to be happy, and our finding out the means of becoming so: unless we so apply those means, as actually to become so? And had he omitted this, only for a time: he might perhaps, in that time, have lost his opportunity, and ever after call'd himself fool, for not using it, while he had it, in his hands. But his resolving to be happy, even to be happy, as he could be, according to his notions: his immediate and industrious application of himself, to find out the true means of becoming so, and his present and effectual Application of those means, so as to become so, are abundant proofs and evidences of his wisdom.

But alas! how little of this wisdom is there to be found among the *Children of Light*, in the management of their Affairs?

fairs? How few of them are there, that ever concern themselves, as they ought to do, about the future : when nevertheless, they pretend to believe, that they have a long future behind, even as long as eternity it self? How few, who ever seriously ask themselves that Question, *What shall I when my Lord taketh away from me the Stewardship?* when they know infallibly, that it cannot be very long before it must, of course, be taken from them? How little do they live, as if they were to live for ever? How little care do they take, to lay in such a stock of happiness, as will hold out while their beings, to all eternity : when yet they profess they believe, that it must be done now, or never, and that they cannot live, with any tolerable ease, comfort and satisfaction till they see it done. Vain and foolish Creatures! to complain of their own folly, and not to mend it : to see eternal happiness, within their reach, and yet scarce to put on so much as one serious and steady resolution, of using their utmost endeavours to obtain and possess it.

Or, if they do happen to aim and resolve well in the matter, yet what little care do they take about setting their aims as high as they ought to do; or even putting their resolutions such as they are, into practice? Eternal happiness they call but own to be the best and noblest end of Man. But then they seem perfectly indifferent, what degree of this happiness shall be theirs : let them but get into Heaven at all, and it is matter at one to them, whether the Glory of the Stars, the Glory of the Moon, or the Glory of the Sun, is to be their Glory. Not and if they do at last act so wisely, as to pronounce the very highest degree of Happiness and Glory, which they are capable of, to be their supreme end; yet how dilatory frequently are they, in searching out how awkward in judging of, how soon discourag'd and beaten off from their quest after, the true means of obtaining it? Any time, God knows, rather than the present, is generally allotted for this : and any means rather than those, which are most plainly fit and proper, generally pitch'd upon. The future time, which is wholly out of our power, is but too commonly destin'd for this important work : and every other way to this end shall be rather try'd than *Holyness in all manner of Conversation*, which is both in its own nature so proper to lead us to it, and without which God himself has assur'd us, it will be impossible for us ever to arrive at it. And then, how apt are most Christians to give

their search, even after this way to the greatest of hap-
 pinesses, if they chance to meet with ever so little difficulty
 opposition in it? If they do not immediately find out a very
 easy and easy passage into Heaven: it is great odds but they
 grow either indifferent or impatient, either think it hardly
 worth their while to take any farther care about it, or despair
 that their care will be to any purpose? If they cannot pro-
 ve themselves, that they shall be able, by one or two as-
 says, to take the Kingdom of Heaven: they often want cou-
 rage to believe that a third however might prove effectual:
 rather pitifully submit, to forego even their hopes of Hea-
 ven itself, than to resolve upon these severe and violent me-
 ans of attaining it. Foolish dilatoriness indeed! to put off
 the study of the way to Heaven, so much as one moment.
 and sottish cowardise! to let our Spirits fail us, even in
 the pursuit of it.

But more foolish yet is that dilatoriness, which is but too
 common among the *Children of Light*, and makes them
 neglect the use of those very means, which they acknowledge to
 be proper, and therefore resolve to pursue, so long, till they
 lose either in part, or perhaps wholly, lost the opportunity
 of using them. More sottish still is that Cowardise, which
 renders them to grow weary, faint and desist, when they have
 the means, as well as their end, plain before them. To what
 purpose do they look into the book of life, to learn from
 it *what they must do to inherit eternal Life*, and there find
 it plainly written, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the Com-
 mandments*: Mat. 19. 17. and yet, after all, either not apply
 themselves to the keeping of them: till it is become exceeding
 difficult, if not impossible, to keep them: or, at least, apply
 themselves so faintly, as not to be able to keep them unto the
 end. Oh! how much wiser would it be, with the unjust
 Steward, not only to resolve to be happy, but immediately and
 unweariedly to search out the right way of becoming so, and
 immediately and unweariedly to prosecute that way, so as to
 become so? For we can never be put too soon into possessi-
 on of a well-grounded hope of eternal happiness, never do
 without it. But I have been too long upon this first head,
 and therefore must only just mention,
 Secondly, The other instance of the unjust Steward's wisdom,
 was *his making a true and wise use of Money*. And that,
 I think, was, by disposing of it so, that it might ever after

(ever, I mean, according to his notion of it) be of advantage to him. For this it is plain he had an entire regard to, in committing to his Lord's Debtors so great a part of their respective debts, as we are told in the Parable he did. *I am resolv'd not to do*, said he, *that when I am put out of the Stewardship, they may receive me into their houses.* As if he had said, I have now in my power a sum of Money, which I will so dispose of, as to make it a security, for my future subsistence and well-being, as long as I shall live. And accordingly he immediately layeth it out so, as he knew would best serve to that end.

And how can a Man possibly better put his Money out to use, than by buying everlasting friends with it? This is to make riches indeed a substantial good; so to fix them, as that with all their wings, they shall not be able to fly away; and so to make the very utmost advantage, and that certainly is the wisest use, that can possibly be made, of them. And therefore this instance of wisdom our Lord explicitly insists upon, and most pathetically recommends to his Disciples v. 9. *And he say unto you, Make to your selves friends of the Mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

And yet alas! how few of the *Children of Light*, are there that act with due regard to this Rule? How few, that are able to fare the better, for their wise disposal of their money: *that their stewardship shall be taken from them?* How few, that distribute so, as to lay up for themselves a good foundation, against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life.

In vain then do the *Children of Light* pretend to manage their Affairs, with as much wisdom as the *Children of the World* do theirs. Too plainly do the foregoing instances convince the contrary, and abundance more might be still said to make it plainer: did I not confine my self to the Parable, were it not high time to hasten,

Secondly, To examine from what causes it can possibly come to pass, that the *Children of this world* should act with more prudence, in relation to the things of this World, than the *Children of light* do, in relation to those of the other. And here I pleas'd to consider

First, The advantages which, in some respects, the things of this World have of those of the other: I do not mean absolute advantages, such as, all circumstances consider'd,

judg'd by a wise Man so to be; for alas! there are none
 such; but such, as Men, who consider things but partially,
 are apt to esteem advances, and to be led away by, as such.
 Of this nature are the actual presence and visibility of the
 things of this World, while those of the other are absent and
 invisible. Which, tho' if impartially consider'd, ought not to
 make us give preference to the things of this World (because
 of the infinitely larger extent, and eternally longer duration,
 of those of the other, which do abundantly make amends for,
 and indeed vastly overbalance, the disadvantages of their ab-
 sence and invisibility) yet, we find by experience, too often
 so. Our senses are generally too hard for our reason and our
 faith: and such fools are we, that, for a small sum paid down
 in the present, we care not what we part with in reversion. We
 pretend most of us to believe the certainty of a future State,
 but I fear many of us, with great wavering and doubtfulness.
 As to the things, which we see and feel, we are sure of: and
 the impressions of these are strong and lively upon our minds,
 while those of the other are faint and languid. Besides even
 those, who do heartily believe a future State, yet for this very
 reason, because it is future and invisible, are apt to forget it,
 and put off the thoughts of it, from time to time: whereas
 present and sensible things are sure to be remembred, and,
 pressing constantly upon us for present care, are too apt to en-
 compass all, and cheat the future. So that, where Men do not
 carefully attend to, and often even force themselves upon a
 serious contemplation of, the future and invisible things of
 another life (and how small is the number of those Men, that
 do this?) it cannot possibly be otherwise but that these future
 and invisible things will have too little of their care, and the
 present and sensible ones, of this World, too much. But
 Secondly, As there is something in the nature of the things
 of this World, which seems to many Men to give them a pre-
 ference to those of the other: so there is something within our
 senses, which inclines us to those rather than these. Ever
 since the fall, our affections are become earthy: and we in-
 herit a curse, not unlike that of the Serpent's, of creeping on
 the ground, and eating the dust. We easily, too easily,
 take delight in being busy'd about the affairs of this Life:
 and, if our minds offer to give the word of command, and
 lead us forth to the business of the other: then we presently
 find a law in our members, warring against the law of our minds.

and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin, which is in our members. Rom. 7. 23. If we steer one way, we are sure to have the full wind and tide of our natural affections along with us; if the other, we are as sure to want both. And therefore the greatest part of Mankind, loving their ease, and being afraid of difficulties, rather than they will be at the trouble of stemming the tide, suffer themselves to be driven by it. Rather than they will be at the pains of climbing up a steep and craggy Rock, tho' it be to Heaven, they will lazily roll easily down hill, tho' it be to Hell. To speak without a figure, what Men love most, they undoubtedly prosecute best: and for this reason often is it, that their conduct, in respect of Heaven, is so awkward and foolish, in respect of the World, so artful and prudent.

Thirdly, Another reason of this is, because the *Children of the World* aim but at one main end, viz. the good things of the World: while the *Children of light* aim at two, and two such as are as different and contrary in their natures one to the other as light and darkness, viz. the World and Heaven too. When a Man has but one thing to do, and unites all his Faculties and Powers for the doing of it, his work cannot fail of going on, easily and successfully: but when he is divided, in his opinions, interests and affections, between two objects, and gives half of himself one way, and half another, it can hardly possibly be otherwise, but that he will make but very little work on't.

Especially if, as in the case before us, he aims at ends directly different and contrary the one to the other; like a Man that is to look before and behind him, almost at the same instant, he will look neither way, to any good purpose. This will it be, at the best, if we are indifferent as to our Ends, and equally inclin'd and dispos'd to both. But, if we once come to lean a little more to one than the other, that will in degrees gain us quite over to it's side, and nothing, but the name of aiming at two ends, will remain. We may at first propose to our selves to serve God and Mammon too, but our blessed Saviour himself tell us, we shall find impossible to practise: we shall soon hate the one and love the other, follow bold to the one and despise the other Matt. 6. 24. And which of the two, God or Mammon, the World or Heaven, we find by experience, ofteneft prevails, I am ashamed to say.

But now the *Children of this world*, not being distracted with different and rival ends, but having only one main end in view, find it an easy matter to keep close to that, and to say and execute wise Designs, for the attainment of it.

Lastly, The fashion of this wicked World, in which we live, is another great cause of this. The general example and custom, approbation and applause, of the World, are apt to have abundantly too great an influence upon us: to draw us into a conformity with them in things, in which we should by no means conform: and to keep us from dissenting from them in things, in which we ought in all reason and duty, to dissent. So that, while Men attend to these, so much as they generally do, it is no wonder at all, that their conduct, in regard to the things of this World, should be so much more prudent and commendable; than in regard to the things of the other. For who knows not, that the Wisdom in fashion altogether that of this World? This is array'd in gorgeous apparel, and Men bow down to it, and worship it, and call thatsoever it dictates the voice of God. When, on the contrary, the wisdom, which, really is from above, is mock'd and derided, and like its blessed Master, revil'd and spit upon. While therefore Men strive to be fashionable, they must necessarily be wise for Earth, and not for Heaven; while they value the praise of Men, more than the praise of God, as they so commonly do, they will not be half so good Servants of God, if at all his Servants, as they will be Servants of the World.

These, if not all, yet, are some of the principal causes of the imprudent Management of the *Children of light*, in relation to their Affairs, if compar'd with that of the *Children of this world*, in relation to theirs. But, least the *Children of this world* should grow conceited, upon this comparison: and, because our Saviour has pronounc'd them *wise in their generation*, they themselves wise indeed; I proceed

Thirdly, To shew, that, altho' they are *wiser in their generation than the children of light*, yet still they are very far from being absolutely and truly, wise. And this will evidently appear from considering, that they are egregiously deficient in every first and main point of wisdom, which is, the choice of their end, the settling of the mark, which they are to shoot for. For, as he can never be said to be a truly wise Man, who does not choose a good end: so neither can he, who does not prefer

prefer a better to a worse, and, for his ultimate and supreme end, fix upon the very greatest good, which he knows himself to be capable of. And consequently, he who doth not choose Heaven before the World, the *certain, solid, ever-satisfying* and *everlasting* Pleasures of that, before the *uncertain, empty, unsatisfying* and *short-liv'd* Pleasures of this: but takes up with the World, as his supreme and ultimate end: as made but a foolish choice, and can never, by any after-conduct, deserve the name of a wise Man. Nay, the wiser he proves afterwards in *his generation*, the more care and pains he takes, to prosecute this ill chosen end, the more foolish still he really grows: because, by this means, he engageth himself still deeper and deeper in that, which he ought, if possible, to extricate himself from: he persueth folly closer and closer, and consequently flies from true wisdom farther and farther.

So that, at the best, the *Children of this world* are but *fools*, and that, methinks, is but a very sorry Character. They very artificially indeed pursue shadows instead of substances: very industriously lay out themselves upon things, which, as the Scripture elegantly expresseth it, are not, are all froth and vanity: and very ingeniously neglect those things, *Prov. 23. 5.* which, not only truly are, are solid and substantial Goods, but shall alone continue to be to all eternity. But God forbid either that any of us should become wise, or any of them longer remain so, at this rate. Rather let us, who call our selves *Children of the light*, *Walk as children of the light*, *Ephes. 5.* with *Life and Immortality* always in our view: *2 Tim. 1. 10.* and let them on the contrary, who have fancy'd themselves wise, because they have been acknowledg'd to be *wise in this generation*, *1 Cor. 4. 10.* become fools, that so they may be truly wise; fools for Earth, that they may be wise for Heaven: fools for time, that they may be wise for eternity. For the more effectual exhorting of both to which, I shall now

Lastly, Conclude all, with a few words of exhortation, both to the *Children of this world*, and the *Children of light*. And

First, For the *Children of this world*: is it not a thousand pities, that all their exact skill, care and industry, should be thrown away and lost, upon the trifling and perishing things of this World, when, if rightly applyed, they might obtain for them and inestimable, and never fading, substance in Heaven? Oh how would they themselves laugh at those poor Wretches, whom they should see taking as much pains to

Lead or Brass, as, if wisely directed, would, with the same ease, bring in Gold? And how much more do they deserve (I will not say to be laugh'd at, for the neglect of Heaven is no laughing matter, but) to be pity'd and bemoaned, who foolishly lavish away that care and pains, upon emptiness and vanity, which would serve for the attainment of such Joys, *as eye never saw, ear never heard*, and such as are too big for the heart of man to conceive? Nay, I will go yet farther, who with half the care and pains, that they take for earth, might obtain heaven. For tho' the business of Religion is at first some what difficult, yet, when once we have conquer'd the beginning, the way after is all smooth: it is all away of continu'd pleasantness. Whereas the business of this World is ever loading us with new burdens, and the more what we call the good things of it encrease upon us, the more do our cravings and appetites, our cares, fears and griefs generally increase too.

For shame then look up, thou worldling, and ly no longer groveling on this sordid Earth. Think seriously with thy self, what a deceitful, treacherous, base, empty cloud of Happiness, thou now grasp'st at, and instantly turn thy back upon it, and scornfully bid adue to it. Again think with thy self, what an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* thy good God has made the high prize of thy calling, and immediately *gird up thy loins*, and endeavour so to run, that thou may'st obtain. And this thou need'st not fear doing with ease, if thou art but willing: since thou hast been long exercis'd and train'd up to care and thoughtfulness, and much more hard labour, than thou wilt need here.

But, mistake me not, I do not mean, that thou shouldst take no care at all about the things of this World; for undoubtedly, God, who has plac'd us in it, and made us to stand so much in need of the things of it, has given us leave, in a proper way and time, to provide, use, and rejoyce in them. All that I desire is, that you would not make this World your ultimate End, but turn your Thoughts from it, as such, and fix upon that, which alone can deserve to be so, the *happiness of the Saints in Heaven*.

And, blessed God! what a glorious exchange will this be for you? What inexpressible Comforts will you feel in your mind, when you shall see Heaven at the end of all your Labours? When your hopes of perishing Riches, shall be turn'd into hopes of a Treasure that can never corrupt or fade away:
and

and your hopes of the trifling Honours of this World, into hopes of ever shining Crowns and Scepters, ever glorious Principalities and Kingdoms. In one word, when, for false pleasures you shall have true ones, for light ones weighty, for one drop of those whole Rivers of these.

Secondly, As to the *Children of light*; what a grievous reproach and disparagement is it to them, that, when they have so truly noble and excellent an end, as they have in view, they should either wholly neglect the prosecution of it, or at least prosecute it with great coldness and indifferency? They cannot but know, that one of the first Rules of Wisdom is, to proportion our concern and care for things, to the merits of the things themselves, and their usefulness to us. Again, they cannot but know that Heaven, as it is in it self more valueable, so it is to us more advantagious and desirable, than all the things of this World put together. And why then, in God's name, do they trifle here, where they ought to be so much in earnest? why are they so frugal of their care and pains for those things, which of all others infinitely best, I had almost said which alone, deserve them?

Oh! let us not be wise in part any longer: but, as we have begun and aim'd wisely, so let us go on, like wise Men, to use our utmost endeavours for the attainment of that end, which we have so wisely aim'd at. And, that present and sensible things may not divert us from these wise endeavours, let us be sure to think often on the certainty and eternity of a future State: how infallible foundations it stands upon even our own nature, reason, and the *word of God who cannot lye*, and by these considerations, let us make it always present with us; how much more, by reason of the eternal duration and the inconceivably vast extent of its Happiness or Misery, it stands us in stead to provide for that, than for the trifling things of this perishing Life, and let us proportion our Cares accordingly.

Again, Let us consider seriously with our selves, what a mean and scandalous thing it is to be said of us, that our deprav'd and irregular affections should get the better of our reason and our faith: and let us forthwith set our selves with all our might, to cultivate, improve and strengthen these, that so they may, as they ought to do, correct, subdue, and entirely keep under, those.

Once more, let us be no longer wavering and doubtful in our Minds, dividing our selves betwixt Earth and Heaven: but let Heaven, which deserves, have us all: that is, principally and before every other thing. Here is our true Treasure: here therefore let our hearts be. Then will the business of Religion go on cheerfully, the Salvation of our Souls securely.

Lastly, Let us often call to mind, what a vile and wretchedly wicked World we live in, and how ill therefore it will become us to be conformed to it, and besides how solemnly we have all promis'd the contrary. Let us dare to be singular, in order to be happy. Let us dare to keep on, in our way towards Heaven, tho' we cannot meet with so much as one, to bear us company in it. Nay, tho' Men should revile us, and persecute us, and say all manner of evil against us, upon this account, yet still let us take heart and manfully go on, always remembering who it is that has said to such, *Great is your reward in Heaven. Mat. 5. 11. And, yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and his reward is with him. Heb. 10. 27. Revel. 22.*

Christ, once offer'd, the Christians All-sufficient Sacrifice.

S E R M O N X.

HEBREWS 9. 26. the latter part of the verse
But now once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.

THIS Epistle being written to the Jewish Converts to Christianity, who, as appears from the frequent cautions given in it against * *relapsing* and *Apostasy*, and the manifold Exhortation to constancy and perseverance, are in some danger of revolting, from their Christian Pro-

c. 3. 12. c. 6. v. 4, 5, 6. c. 10. 25, 26, 28, 29. 38. c. 3. 13. c. 4. 10. 23, 35.

fession,

fession, to the Law of *Moses*: the Author of it spends the
 greatest part of it, in representing to them the excellency
 and advantages of the Christian Dispensation, above the
Mosaical; as the properest Argument which he could possibly
 use to keep them from hankering any more after the Law,
 and to make them firm and immoveable, in their adherence
 to the Gospel. With this Topick he begins his Epistle, and
 closely persweth it throughout his *ten* first Chapters: proving
 by uncountroulable Authorities, taken from the Law, the
Psalms, and the *Prophets*, of the *Jews* themselves. the perfecti-
 on of the Gospel above that of the Law; and this, not in one
 or two, but, in every respect. For as Jesus Christ, the
 Mediator of the new Covenant in the Gospel, was, both in
 his own nature, and likewise upon account of those officers
 and honours, with which God invested him, a much more ex-
 cellent person than *Moses*, § or even than the Angels, by whom
 the Law was spoken; so the Covenant of the Gospel it self was
 a much better Covenant than that of the Law, tending more
 to perfection, founded upon *better Promises*, and bringing in
better hope: (a) its Priesthood of a more noble order, *Royal*, *Im-*
mortal, *Unchangeable*, establish'd upon the Oath of God, which
 the Levitical, that is the *Jewish* Priesthood was not, and the
 Privileges belonging to it such, as theirs never enjoy'd
 could hope for, which was for the High Priest to enter
 once for all, into the true Holy of Holies, the *Highest Heaven*
 there to sit down for ever at the right hand of God, and to save
 the uttermost all them, that come to God by him: its High Priest
 so qualify'd, as the Jews could never boast of any one among
 theirs, (c) *holy*, *harmless*, and *undefil'd*, separate from Sinners
 And therefore not needing, as theirs did, first to make atone-
 ment for his own sins, before he could be fit to make atone-
 ment for those of the people: (d) its *Tabernacle* a greater
 more perfect *Tabernacle*, even the Heavenly Sanctuary it self
 of which the *Jewish* *Tabernacle* was but a very faint and im-
 perfect Type and Shadow: and Lastly, its sacrifice a much
 more valuable and efficacious Sacrifice; (e) not the Blood
 of Goats and of Calves, but of Christ himself; not sanctifying
 to the purifying of the flesh, but purging our Consciences from de-

§ c. 1. 2, 3. c. 7. 19 8. 6. (a) c. 7. 11. 14, 16, 20, 21, 24, 28. (b)
 9. 24. 7. 25. (c) c. 7. 26, 27, 28. (d) c. 9. 11. (e) c. 8. 5. 10. 1. c. 9.
 13, 14, 15.

works, to serve the living God, and obtaining eternal Redemption for us: not oftentimes offer'd, and yet never able to take away sins, but, (f) by one offering perfecting for ever them that are sanctify'd.

And these three very great and eminent advantages and perfections of the Christian Sacrifice, above those of the Jews, or indeed any other whatsoever, I shall beg leave to make the Subject of my following Discourse: they being all compriz'd in the Words of my Text, which plainly assert these three things.

First, That the Christians sacrifice is Christ himself: for we are told that he, that is Christ, appear'd to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself.

Secondly, That this sacrifice was a full and effectual Expiation, or Atonement, for our Sins: as is imply'd in those words, to put away sin.

Lastly, That this sacrifice was offer'd once for all, and is to be no more repeated: but now once hath he appear'd to put away sin.

And, in treating of each of these Particulars, I shall first prove the truth of it, and then its advantagefulness to us Christians.

First, That the Christians sacrifice is Christ himself: by which I mean, that Christ, in his death upon the Cross, became a true and proper expiatory Sacrifice, for the sins of all men, as should believe in him. I say in his death upon the Cross, because the Socinians † pretend that the expiation, which he made for sin, was made in Heaven, and not upon Earth; whereas the words of my Text plainly refer to what he did here on Earth. He appear'd or was made manifest, say they: where? on Earth no doubt, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself. And accordingly we find that, the remission of our sins, and reconciliation of us to God, Eph. 2. 16. are instantly attributed in Scripture to Christ's death, Colos. 1. 22. and his blood shed on the Cross, as the immediate effect of them; and he is expressly there said, to have obtain'd eternal redemption for us, before he enter'd into the Holy place. that is Heaven. And certainly, he never look'd so like an expiatory sacrifice, where, as there, where he bare our sins in his own body, where he shed his blood for the remission of them, and made peace

for us, that is, on his Cross. Heb. 9. 12. 1 Pet. 2. 24. Mat. 26. 28. Colof. 1. 20.

If then our Saviour was a true and proper expiatory Sacrifice, he was undoubtedly so upon his Cross. And, that he was to be, and actually was such a one, seems to me to be so plain and certain a truth : so clearly foretold, as part of the Character of the *Messiah*, in the Old Testament : and so fully and constantly affirm'd of our *Jesus* in the new : and withal giving us such a noble and becoming account of the death and passion of Christ, so highly for the honour of God and our Saviour himself ; that I am amaz'd to think that any, who pretend to believe the Scriptures, and to be lovers of rational and consistent Schemes of things, can prevail upon themselves to entertain the least doubt, about this matter.

As to the Old Testament : besides that it were easy to prove were it needful, that all the expiatory Sacrifices, under the Law, were but types * and shadows of that grand and substantial Expiation, which the *Christ* or *Messiah* was to make, by the Sacrifice of himself : besides that there are several Expressions, in its Prophecies, which seem evidently to mark out the *Messiah* for an expiatory Sacrifice, (as, that he should bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows : that he should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities : that the Chastisement of our peace should be upon, and that by his stripes we should be heal'd that God should lay upon him the iniquities of us all : Isa. 53. that he should be brought, as a Lamb, to the slaughter : that he should be cut out of the Land of the living, and stricken for the transgression of his people ; and that he should bear the iniquities of many Texts, which the Antient Jews, who liv'd before our Saviour's time, and were § unprejudic'd, did generally acknowledge to relate to the *Messiah*) besides all this, I say, and the Prophet *Daniel's* intimation to this purpose, that *Messiah* should be cut off, but not for himself ; we are told in express words, that his, the *Messiah's* Soul, himself or his life. Should be made an offering for sin. Dan. 9. 26. And what can the offering of his life for sin mean, but his becoming an expiatory sacrifice for sin ?

And then, in the New Testament, we not only find *St. John the Baptist* bespeaking our Saviour for an expiatory Sacrifice in those words of his, *Behold the Lamb of God, which takes*

* v Oughtnam de sacrificiis, p. 18, 209, 210, 111, 212. § Pearson on the Creed p. 87.

away the sins of the world ; John 1. 29. words, which plainly allud to the *Lambs*, Levit. 1. 10. 5. 6. which were slain for expiation of sins, under the Law ; but we likewise find him call'd a sacrifice, a sacrifice for sin, set in opposition to the expiatory Sacrifices of the *Jews*, and his blood to their blood : Eph. 5. 2. and therefore prov'd to be a proper *High-Priest*, whose office chiefly consisted in offering gifts and sacrifices for sin, † because he offer'd himself a sacrifice for sin. Moreover we there find all the qualities and properties of a true expiatory sacrifice attributed to him. As that he was substituted in the room of offenders, Mat. 20. 28. to hear the punishment of their sins ; Tim. 2. 6. He was to give his life a ransom for, or instead of many, may he did give it a ransom for all, * *ΛΥΤΕΡΩΝ & ΑΝΤΙΛΥΕΡΩΝ*, the proper words to signify an expiatory Sacrifice ; he was made a curse for us ; 2 Cor. 5. 21. he suffer'd for the unjust, he dy'd for the ungodly, Gal. 3. 13. he was offer'd to bear the sins of many, 1 Pet. 3. 18. he tasted death for every man, that so he might deliver us from the fear of it. That he did voluntarily offer his life to God, for the expiation of sin : Rom. 5. 6. No one took away his life from him, but he lay'd it down of himself : He gave it as an offering, and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour : Heb. 10. 28. 2. 9. 14. 15. He saw that God had no pleasure in those sacrifices, Joh. 10. 18. and offerings, and burnt offerings, and offerings for sin, which were offer'd by the Law ; Eph. 5. 2. and, of his own accord he cry'd out, Lo I come to do thy will, O God, by offering my body once for all. Heb. 10. 8, 9, 10. And lastly, that God was consenting to all this, and that it had the effect of taking away sin, or the punishment of it, as expiatory sacrifices us'd to have : God himself prepar'd him a body, for this purpose : Heb. 10. 5. he deliver'd him up for us all : Rom. 8. 32. he sent him to be the propitiation for our sins ; 1 Joh. 4. 10. he made sin for us : 2 Cor. 5. 21. he gave him this commandment to lay down his life : Joh. 10. 17, 18. And therefore did he love us, because he laid it down. Rom. 3. 25. And, by this death of us, we are said to have remission of sins, and to be reconcil'd to God. Colos. 1. 21, 22.

Add to this, that this account, which the Scripture give us, of the end and occasion of Christ's taking our nature upon him, and humbling himself to death, even the death upon the Cross, viz.

† Heb. 10. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, Heb. 9. 12. Heb. 5. 9.

* *Oughtiram de Sacrifici: l. 2. c. 6. §. 4, 5:*

that it was upon an agreement between him and his Father, in this way to *make an atonement for the sins of the whole world*, is truly great and noble, worthy the Son of God, and God himself; and therefore giveth full satisfaction to our minds, as to this point. Whereas, setting aside this account, we shall be hard put to't to find any other account of this wonderful dispensation, that will be at all satisfactory. For this, I take it for granted, no body will deny me, that it is not to be conceiv'd, that the Son of God should be deliver'd up to death, but for the obtaining of some end of the highest moment and importance and that too such an end, as could not well, at least not near so well, be any other way obtain'd. And such an end I take the *procuring of pardon for the sins of the whole world*, to be; one of the greatest and noblest ends, for which God and his Son could concern themselves: and withal such an end, as, we cannot apprehend, could have been obtain'd in any other way, so consistent with the infinite Majesty, Holyness and justice, of God, with the Honour and Authority of his Laws, and with his fix'd decree to have sin discourag'd to the utmost for the future, as this, of the *Sacrifice of his well-beloved Son*, is. But we must not pretend to say the same of those two other ends, which the Socinians assign as the sign of Christ's death, viz. *That he might be an example of patience* and *that he might confirm the truth of God's promises*; and therefore we cannot acquiesce in these alone, tho' we can fully in the other, as giving us a rational and becoming account of the end and occasion of Christ's Passion and Death.

And, Blessed God! what a glorious and comfortable consideration must this needs be to us Christians, that we have the assurance that can be desir'd, that Christ himself is our Sacrifice. Christ, I say, who, as the Author of this Epistle describes him, *Heb. 1. having made the worlds, and upholding all things by the word of his power, and being ador'd by all the Angels of God, the commandment of God himself, and being the brightness of God's glory, and the express Image of his person* must necessarily be God: and yet, having taken upon him the seed of Abraham, and been made partaker of flesh and blood, must be as surely man too, as he is God; c. 2. and being both God and Man, was perfectly well qualify'd, to become a sufficient and Satisfactory Sacrifice to God, for the sins of the whole world. For his Humanity made him capable of *shedding his blood*, for our redemption, without which God had ordain'd that there should be *no remission of sins* Heb. 9. 22. and moreover of suffering for us, in the very same

ature that had sinn'd, which was most agreeable to Justice and Equity; and his Divinity gave such an Infinite value to his sufferings, as made him such a Sacrifice, as a God of Infinite Majesty, Justice and Holyness, might securely accept of, to full satisfaction for all our Sins, without any the least derogation from his Honour and Authority, without any the least jealousy of encouraging sin, and a contempt or neglect of his laws, for the future. Oh! into how much better a condition are we Christians put, by having such a Sacrifice to trust to, as, we are sure, was capable of offering to God full satisfaction, for our sins, than either the *Heathens* or *Jews*, who had nothing better, than the blood of beasts, to place their confidence in; which, being not of the same nature with that which sinn'd, could not, even according to the opinions of the *Heathens* themselves, † make atonement to God, for sinners: and which moreover, bearing no manner of proportion to the guilt of Sin, and the dishonour done to God by it, nor being any way sufficient to make reparation to God, for past sins, and to discourage sin for the future, could not possibly, the Scripture it self tells us, *take away sins*? Heb. 10. 4. more especially, how much better will our condition appear to be than theirs? when we come to consider.

Secondly, That this Sacrifice was a full and effectual ex- ation or atonement, for our sins; that is, that it did fully satisfy God's Justice, and appease his wrath against us upon the account of our sins, remove the punishment of them, set us perfectly right in his sight, and render him entirely reconcil'd and propitious to us. For it is not enough, that we have a sacrifice capable of doing all this for us, unless we can be assur'd likewise, that God has accepted it, to such full purpose and effect; it being undoubtedly purely at his free will and pleasure, whether he would accept of any person to suffer in our stead, or no, tho' never so capable, and also to determine, how far the sufferings of such a person should be available, for the atonement of our sins. Nor yet is it enough to have prov'd in general, that God did accept of our Saviour for an expiatory Sacrifice, and that, as such, he did in some sense *take away sin*: for so did the expiatory Sacrifices among the *Jews*, which yet, we are sure, did not wholly and fully take it away: but we must prove more-

over, that God did accept of our Saviour's Sacrifice, in full and entire satisfaction for our sins.

And it seems to be, at least, a very good presumptive proof of this, that God himself, who was consenting to, and concern'd in, this whole business of our Saviour's offering himself a Sacrifice for our sins, and who never doth any thing in vain, did take care that such a Sacrifice should be offer'd to him, as was capable of making such a full and entire satisfaction. Besides, it doth not seem consistent with God's honour to suppose, that he should send his Son, to do a work imperfectly or by halves, or that he should not so far respect his Sacrifice, as to allow all that Efficacy to it, which it was capable of. Farther, the Scripture speaks very plainly and home, as to this point. My Text tells us that Christ came to put away sin, or, as the words may be translated, for the frustrating and disannulling of sin, so as to render it of no manner of force or power against us. Thus we find the word [*Εἰς ἀθέτησιν αἰματίας.*] us'd in this very Epistle, *there is verily a disannulling* (the same word with that in my Text) an abrogation or utter abolition of the force and power, *of the commandment going before* Heb. 7. 18. And so, in Heathen Authors, the word is us'd to signify an utter abrogation of Laws, so as quite to extinguish and make void the whole force and obligation of them; as frustrating and bringing to nothing, Mark 7. 9. Gal. 2. 21. Luk. 7. 30. 1 Cor. 1. 19. as it is translated likewise, in other places of Scripture. And we are frequently assur'd, that God *has reconcil'd us to himself by the death of his Son*, Colos. 1. 21, 22. that we have remission of sins in his blood, Rom. 3. 25. that his blood cleanseth us from all sin. 1 Joh. 1. 7. that by him we are justify'd from all things, from which we could not be justify'd, by the law of Moses, Acts 13. 39. that in him, God hath forgiven us all our crimes, Colos. 2. 13. and, to name no more, that by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctify'd. Heb. 10. 14. Texts, to our unexpressable comfort, as clear and fully to our present purpose, as our own hearts can wish.

And indeed, when we seriously consider that God, not only releas'd Christ, who was our surety, from the bands of death, which he under went, as the punishment of our sins; but moreover, immediately after his Resurrection, shew'd as possible favour and honour to him; giving him all power, both in Heaven and in Earth; exalting him to the right hand of his Majesty on high, and there making him sit down, far above all principalities

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pality, and power, and might, and dominion, Heb. 7. 22. Mat. 28. 18. Heb. 1. 3. Eph. 1. 20, 21. and all this too, for this very reason, *because he by himself purg'd our sins*: when we consider all these things together, we shall find great reason to infer with the Apostle, that *there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. 8. 1. 33. and that no one shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect; but that all those blessed Prophecies, relating to the times of the Messiah, are now amply fulfill'd; viz. that *transgressions should be finish'd, sin made an end of, reconciliation made for iniquity, and everlasting righteousness brought in*: Dan. 9. 24. and that God would forgive the iniquity of his People, and remember their sin no more. Jerem. 31.

4. Add to this, that the ceasing of Sacrifices, under the Christian Dispensation, under which *there remains no more sacrifice for sin*, Heb. 10. 26. is a manifest proof that sin is already aton'd for, by the Sacrifice of Christ. For, to turn the Argument of the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, 10, 18. *where remission of sins is, there is no more offering for sin*; where *there is no more offering for sin*, there, say we, is *remission full and entire remission, of sins*.

And this, this is the Christian's confidence and rejoicing of hope, Heb. 3. 6. that he knows himself to be *accepted in the beloved*: *in whom he hath redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins*. Eph. 1. 6, 7. This is a most illustrious and incomparable advantage, that the Christian Sacrifice has over the Jewish, that, while that can sanctify only to the purifying of the flesh, that is, can only give an outward legal cleanness, by which Men may be qualify'd for external Communion, with the Congregation of God's People, and save from civil punishments and temporal death: this can purge our consciences, our very souls themselves, from dead works, Heb. 9. 12, 13, 14. from the guilt of such sinful works; as death was due to, and obtain eternal redemption for us. 15. And yet, as great as this advantage is, is not all: For

Thirdly and Lastly, This Sacrifice was offer'd once for all, and is to be no more repeated. For so my Text tells us, that *now once Christ hath appear'd to take away sin*: and other places of scripture, that *he was once offer'd to bear the sins of many*, Heb. 9. 8. that *by his own blood he entred in once into the holy place*, 12. that *he hath once suffer'd for sin*, 1 Pet. 3. 18. and that *there remaineth no more sacrifice for it*. And we have a very good rea-

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son given us for this, viz. because, by one offering, Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctify'd, and we are sanctify'd through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all; Heb. 10. 26. 10. 18. so that there is no farther need of any offering for sin. Under the Jewish Law indeed, where the Sacrifices could not make them, for whom they were offer'd, perfect, nor take away sins, the Priests were forc'd to stand daily ministring, and offering often times the same sacrifice, 1. 11. and to offer them year by year continually. But such is efficacy, such the excellency of the Christian's one single Sacrifice, that, after our High Priest had once offer'd that, he sat down for ever on the right hand of God; from thenceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 12. 13.

What then, perhaps some Men will say, is one main end of repeating Sacrifices, under the Jewish Dispensation, which was, to keep up in Mens minds an habitual and constant sense and dread of the guilt and punishment of sin, quit forgotten and lost under the Christian? as it seems to be, if there be no provision there made, for the repetition of Sacrifices. I answer no: it is so far from being forgotten and lost, that it is abundantly better provided for, by Christ's Institution of his holy Supper, in commemoration of his having once been offer'd a bloody Sacrifice for sin; a bare remembrance of which must needs be much more effectual, for the keeping alive in our minds a quick and terrifying sense of the guilt and punishment of sin, than the seeing ten thousand beasts sacrific'd for it, could possibly be. So that we need not the Church of Rome to help us out in this Point, by saying for us, that the sacrifice of the Mass is a true expiatory Sacrifice, * and again, that it is not only a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, or a bare commemoration of the sacrifice finish'd on the cross, but a propitiatory sacrifice, a true and proper sacrifice offer'd to God. A Doctrine, so directly contrary to Scripture and so highly derogating from the merits of our Saviour's Sacrifice, the infinite value of which might surely well make one oblation of it sufficient; that we should have reason to wonder at any Council, for requiring the belief of it, under pain of an Anathema; any Council, I say, but that, which had before shew'd it self forsaken of common sense, when it establish'd the Doctrine † of Transubstantiation.

And this is no small advantage to us Christians, that, by Christ's offering of himself once for all, we are set free from

* *Can. Con. Trids. Sess. 22. c. 2, can. 3. 1.* † *Sess. 13. c. 4.*

the expence, care and trouble of providing more Sacrifices: all which were very heavy upon the *Jews*, and made their yoke to be such, as neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. Acts 15. 10 Certainly in this as well as in all other respects, our blessed Lord has fully made good his words to us. That *his yoke is easy, and his burden is light*. Mat. 11. 30. But the greatest advantage of all is, that hereby we have full assurance of faith, that God will remember our sins and iniquities no more, Heb. 10. 17, 2. 2. and that we, being once purg'd by the blood of Jesus, have no more conscience of sins, no more inward dread of the guilt or punishment due to them: but are perfected for ever, 24. have a full atonement made for all our sins, past and to come, by this one offering, if we take care to be sanctify'd, to fulfil the Conditions, upon which it is offer'd, for the atonement of our sins. And this is such a blessed assurance as, no other Sacrifice, but that of the Son of God, could possibly give.

And thus I hope, I have sufficiently prov'd and confirm'd the truth of that Doctrine, which my Text proposeth to us, and our Holy Church most religiously maintains, viz. that Christ, by his own oblation of himself, once offer'd upon the cross, made there a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world; and likewise have very evidently shew'd the vast and inexpressible advantage of this to us Christians, if I may presume upon your patience a little longer, I will very briefly put you in mind of several important Duties, that are naturally to be infer'd from this Doctrine. And

First, If God so lov'd the World, as to give his only begotten Son to die for us. Joh. 3. 16. that so he might reconcile us to himself, by his death, through the blood of his cross: Coloss. 1. 20. 21, 22. us, who had been alienated from, and enemies to, him, by wicked works; most certainly this consideration ought to affect us, with a most deep and lasting sense of God's unspeakable love and goodness towards us: and to engage and excite us, in all possible ways, to acknowledge and return this Love. By magnifying God's name for it, both in publick and private: by making it the great business of our Lives, so to serve, obey and please him, that we may become truly qualify'd for the blessed effects of it: nay and, by denying our selves, taking up our Saviours Cross, and most willingly becoming obedient unto death, for his sake, whenever he shall think fit to call us to it,

Again, this great and wonderful expression of God's love to us should encourage us, in all our wants and difficulties, to draw near to God with humble confidence, and to ask of him, and depend upon him for, a supply of, and release from, them: For, as St. Paul argues. *He that spar'd not his own son, but deliver'd him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Rom. 8. 32.

Once more, If God has so lov'd us, how ought we to love one another? If he, who lay under no manner of obligation to seek and to save us, 1 John 4. 9, 10, 11. when we had, thro' our own folly, gone astray and lost our selves: did nevertheless, out of infinite compassion and goodness, *send his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, that we through him might live*: how ready ought we to be, who lye under manifold obligations to promote each others good, to assist and befriend each other, to the utmost? More especially how ready should we always be, to do any thing for the good of one anothers Souls? How careful to imitate the Divine Goodness, in using our best endeavours, to prevent any from perishing, and to bring all to repentance; considering one another, to provoke unto love and to good works? 1 Pet. 3. 9.

Nay farther, If God commended his love to us, in that when we were enemies, he reconcil'd us to himself, by the death of his Son; Heb. 10. 24. Rom. 8. 10. how ought this to teach us, to forgive, love and pray for our enemies? that so we may approve our selves true Children of the most high, Luke 6. 35. who doth good to the just and unjust, and is kind even to the unthankful and the evil. Mat. 5. 45.

Secondly, Did Christ, when he was in the form of God, and equal with God, make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and humble himself, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, Phil. 2. 5, 6, 7, 8. that so he might bring us to God? Let this mind, then, be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus. 1 Pet. 3. 18. Let us never think our selves too great to do good, to high to look down upon our Brethren. Oh no! the lower we stoop to do good, the higher do we really rise: the nearer we follow our blessed Lord, in his charitable abasement of himself here, the nearer shall we one day be plac'd to him, in his glory hereafter.

Thirdly, Is Sin of such an heinous and malignant nature, and so very odious in the sight of God, that nothing less than the blood of the Son of God, could make a full and sufficient satisfaction

satisfaction and expiation for it? What an utter abhorrence and detestation of Sin ought this consideration to beget, and imprint deeply on our Minds? For certainly if God brus'd and put to grief, *Isai. 53. 10.* in the most terrible manner, his only begotten Son, when standing in the place of Sinners; there can nothing remain for us, if we continue wilfully in our sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour us. *Heb. 10. 26, 27.*

And this consideration of the odious and provoking nature of Sin, in God's sight, and the certain evil consequences that will attend and punish it, ought likewise to influence us in our politicall Capacities, as members of one common body, and make us all, in our respective stations, most exactly diligent and careful, to discourage and suppress Vice: as the best way, which we can possibly take, to shew our love to our Country, and to ward off all manner of ills and mischiefs from it,

Fourthly, Has the Sacrifice of Christ taken away the curse of sin, which was everlasting death? What reason can there then be, for our standing any longer in fear of death? Ought we not rather to cry out, in triumph over it, with *St. Paul, 1 Cor. 15. 55, 56, 57.* *O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law, But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Fifthly, Doth there remain no more sacrifice for sin? then stands us in great stead, to take heed to the utmost of sinning, beyond what this Sacrifice will atone for; that is, indeed, to take heed of sinning at all. For, since the merits of this Sacrifice will be available for none, but such, as repent of their sins, become obedient, and are sanctify'd, in this Life: and since all Men who give up themselves to a course of sinning, nay even those who willfully commit but a single sin, run a manifold hazard, whither they shall repent or no: it is plain that every sin, much more every habit of sin, puts us in danger of sinning, beyond what the merits of this Sacrifice will atone for. More especially ought we to be careful, that we do not be in an impenitent state. For, whatever the Church of Rome may talk of Sacrifices for the dead, we have no ground from Scripture to trust in any such.

Lastly, Since the Sacrifice of Christ is of such vast advantage to all Christians, and procureth for them so many and such estimable benefits, hence we may learn, what great reason

Christ.

Christians have, at all times to contemplate and remember this Sacrifice: but more particularly, when they partake of that holy Feast, which our Lord himself purposely instituted for the commemoration of it. With what eager joy and delight ought we to embrace all opportunities, but more particularly the great and solemn one now approaching, of remembering how dearly the Son of God has loved us, even unto death, and how beneficial, unspeakably beneficial, this his love has been to us? With what desire ought we to desire to be frequent in the commemoration of that Sacrifice, which has taken away sin, overcome death, obtain'd eternal redemption, and set open the gate of everlasting Life, for us?

And oh! that every one of us may so effectually remember it, as evermore to hate and avoid sin, which was the occasion of it: so effectually, above all things to love him, who willingly became this Sacrifice for us: in one word, so effectually, as to live ever hereafter like those, who are brought with a price, even the inestimable price of the blood of the Son of God: and are therefore bound, to glorify God, with their bodies and spirits, which are his. 1 Cor. 6. 20.

The desirableness of dying a righteous Man's Death.

S E R M O N XI.

NUMBERS 23. 10. the latter part of the verse

Let me dye the death of the righteous, and let my life end be like his.

WHat Balaam, whose words these are, precisely meant by them, and whither, as some learned Men suppose, [Grot. in loc.] he had respect in them only to the temporal promises of the Jewish Law, by which good Men seem to have been secur'd against violent and untimely Death is not very material here to enquire. It is enough, for my purpose

ent purpose, that that holy Spirit, by which *Balaam* spake, may be very reasonably presum'd to have had a much larger and nobler prospect, a much higher meaning and intention, in them; and that, according to the natural and unforced sense of the words themselves, *to dye the death of the righteous* must signify to dye, exactly in the same circumstances and condition, in respect of death consider'd purely as death, in which a righteous man dyeth; and to have our *last end like his* must either signify the same thing with *dying his death* (Death being frequently call'd in Scripture Man's last or latter end) or else it may farther denote our undergoing the same sentence at the day of Judgment, and having the same lot and portion that he shall (the word, which we here translate last end, signifying sometimes the final issue and event, the ultimate result and upshot of things, as also the wages and rewards of them.) But it is needless to contend which of these senses shall take place, since in reality and effect they are both the same, and do virtually and implicitly comprehend each other. For he, and none but he, who *dyeth a righteous man's death*, shall have a righteous Man's judgment, and be partaker in a righteous Man's rewards.

The entire sense then of this wish may be briefly summon'd up in these following words. O may it so happen to me, that, when I come to dye, I may both in the hour of my death, and in whatever is to come after it, fare just so as the righteous Man shall.

The words thus explain'd offer me a fair opportunity, of enquiring.

First, Why it is such a desirable thing to *dye a righteous Man's death*.

Secondly, How they ought to live who expect and desire so to dye, and

Lastly, Of earnestly exhorting you all to use your utmost endeavours, so to live, that ye may not fail of so dying.

First, Why it is such a desirable thing to *dye a righteous Man's death*: and for this the Scriptures have given us abundance of very plain and convincing Reasons, *viz.* because *the end of that man is peace*; *he hath hope in his death*; Ps. 37. 37. *to him dye is gain*; 'tis to be *present with the Lord*, Prov. 14. 32. *to be comforted in Abraham's bosom*, &c. that is, in other words, to be immediately admitted to a very great and glorious State of happiness, Luk. 23. 43.

16. 22. and, if not the very greatest of all (which probably shall not be enter'd upon, till after the general judgment) yet a sure and infallible pledge of that, state only inferior to that. Death, which we are all apt to be so much afraid of, and which to the unrighteous Man is indeed a King of terrors, is to the righteous Man not terrible at all. But, under what notion so ever we consider it (whether as it is our leaving this present World, as it is a separation of our Soules and Bodies, or as it is our entrance upon a new and unchangeable state of things, it can never come too soon, or be an unacceptable and welcome guest to such an one.

First, Let us consider it, as it is our leaving this present World, a place so dear to the generality of Mankind, that they think it impossible they can ever make too much of it, or cling too fast to it. A place, which they cannot bear so much as the thoughts of leaving, without the utmost regret and reluctancy imaginable, much less can actually take their leaves of, without becoming all over amazement, horror and distraction. A place, which they must be even violently forc'd and torn from, against all their strongest inclinations and affections, or, which, if they do seem to give up at last, it is only because they cannot help it, and find it in vain to struggle for it any longer.

But, blessed be God, the case is quite otherwise with the righteous Man : He has been taught and convinc'd, from the very beginning of his life, at least of his spiritual life, that he was not to expect here an abiding city : but to look upon himself as a Pilgrim and a Stranger : lyable to be summon'd hence to his Father's house in a far distant Country, at an hour when perhaps he may not think of it, nay, it may be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without so much as the least warning, in the midst of his health, and in the flower of his Age.

And accordingly, he has made it his great care not to set his affections upon this world or the things of it, but to wean and take them off from them, as much as possibly he could ; to live above them, and to sit loose to them ; to use the World indeed, but not to abuse it, knowing that the fashion of it passeth away.

He has been mindful likewise of setting his house in order and disposing his worldly Affairs so, that they may not trouble him, when he cometh to dye. He has with infinite satisfaction, repos'd every thing, that is most dear to him here, in the

arms of God's wife and good Providence, and cast all his care upon one, who he is sure, careth for him. And, as for that spiritual work, which God had given him to do here, he has long since made that his chief concern and business. He has been careful to work in the day, well knowing, that *the night would come, when no man can work*; he has *finish'd his course*, he *has kept the faith*: his loyns are girded about, and his lights burning: and he himself is as one waiting for his Summons out of this World, in which, if God so thinks fit, he has nothing more to do.

Besides, he has all along liv'd under a right notion and apprehension of this present World; as of a place, where a Man may be sure that he shall meet with a great deal of solid and substantial trouble, but little, very little, true and real pleasure; a place full of snares and temptations for good Men, where they are always in danger, without the utmost caution, of making shipwreck of their vertue and hope of salvation, and where consequently they have been forc'd to converse, with much fear, jealousy, reservedness, restraint and uneasiness; a place, where not improbably he has been ill us'd, and persecuted for his righteousness sake: at least, where he has been put to it to make his way, with much difficulty, thro' the oppositions and contradictions of Sinners, and where, by dwelling amongst such, he has had his *righteous soul vex'd, from day to day, with seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds*.

But, above all: he is possess'd with a firm and unshaken belief that, whenever he shall be taken out of this World, he shall be translated into another infinitely more happy and desirable: that Death shall not put an end to his being, or deprive him of all his pleasures and enjoyments, but that it shall only change them for such as are unspeakably better: and that he shall have a rich amends made him in the Life to come, for those few valuable things, such as good Friends, Relations, &c. which he has been forc'd to leave behind him in this World.

And what now can any Man see, in this Character of the righteous Man, that should incline him to believe that his departure out of this World will be in the least, terrible or uneasy to him? surely it is much more reasonable to conclude from it, that such an one will, as it is express'd in the book of Job, *rejoyce exceedingly, and be glad when he can find the grave*, when he can have leave to retire from this Sink of Sin and misery, and to gain a peaceful and secure retreat, within those blessed

bleſſed Regions, where all his cares, all his fears, and all his dangers ſhall ceaſe together : where his time of Tryal and Probation ſhall be happily over, the high prize of his calling ſecur'd. beyond all danger of looſing it again, and his Rewards already begun, in a very glorious, tho' improving, State of pure and endleſs Felicity.

Secondly, Let us conſider Death, as it is a ſeparation of our Souls and Bodies; two dear companions you'll ſay, that have long liv'd together in ſo cloſe and intimate an union, that, for this fifty or threeſcore years or more, perhaps, they have never been ſo much as one moment abſent from each other. And muſt theſe part at laſt ? certainly this muſt needs be a very ſad and melancholy parting. A ſad parting, no doubt, to them, who have wholly or chiefly, given themſelves up to bodily pleaſures, and liv'd altogether a Life of fleſh and ſenſe, and never had any true reliſh of a rational, ſpiritual and divine Life ; and who conſequently, when they put off their bodies, muſt neceſſarily put off all hopes of Happineſs with them. But, by no means ſad to a righteous Man, who has made it his conſtant buſineſs to *keep under his body and to bring into ſubjection*, to live *abſtractedly and ſpiritually*, and to *have his converſation, in Heaven*; and who, by ſo doing, has fitted and prepar'd himſelf for that pure and ſpiritual Life, which he knew he muſt enter upon, as ſoon as ever he ſhould be ſtripp'd of his body. Nay, ſo far from ſad to him, to whom his Body has been all along a troubleſome and ungovernable Subject, a mighty clog and hindrance to all the Affairs of his Soul, a perfect priſon and reſtraint to it, and the cauſe of innumerable temptations, pains, difficulties and diſorders; that it is utterly inconceivable to reaſon, that he ſhould not be very well pleas'd to be releas'd from it: to be ſet free at once from all theſe evils and uneaſineſſes, and to be put into a full and perfect liberty of perſuing the natural aims and deſires of his Soul, without any, the leaſt, let or interruption, for evermore. Beſides, even in meer kindneſs to his body, he cannot but be willing to part with it, becauſe he knows aſſuredly that his parting with it, for a little while, will be for its infinire gain and advantage : and that after a ſhort time, he ſhall receive it again for ever ſo ſpiritualiz'd and refin'd above what it was, that it ſhall never more be any trouble or incumbrance to him. He lays it down in a ſure and certain hope of its Reſurrection to Life again, when tho' it was *sown in corruption*, it ſhall be *rais'd in incorruption*.

ion, tho' it was sown in dishonour, it shall be rais'd in glory, 1 Cor. 15. tho' it was sown in weakness, it shall be rais'd in power, tho' it was sown a natural body, it shall be rais'd a spiritual body, tho' it was once mortal, it shall now have put on immortality.

Lastly, if we consider Death, as it is our entrance upon new and unchangeable state of things, we shall be so far from finding it unacceptable to a righteous Man, upon this account: that, to use the Apostle's words, this is his hope, his joy, his crown of rejoycing. He can easily acquiesce and be contented, under the other two notions of death, but in this he perfectly exults and triumphs; nay, it is this which mainly supports and comforts him, under the two. And who indeed can forbear triumphing over death, that knows it to be to him only a short dark passage into everlasting glory? That knows it to be the gate of Paradise, tho' a little strait, and narrow and difficult to pass thro'; and the entrance into such Joys, 'as eye never saw, ear never heard, and such as are too big for the heart of man to conceive? Revel. 7. 16, 17, 21. 4. Oh blessed place! where 'all tears shall be wip'd from our eyes, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: where we shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the Sun light on us, nor any heat or cold; but we shall partake of a fulness of joy, and of rivers of pleasure, at God's right hand for evermore. Blessed God! who would not gladly exchange this world, even tho' it were much more desirable than it is, for such a transcendently happy state as this? Who would not rather part with ten thousand bodies, if he had them, than be excluded from this glorious and blissful Place, into which flesh and blood cannot enter. Oh! who can possibly fear death, with such an heaven as this, at the end of it? Who would not even long and desire thus to dye away into everlasting life?

But here perhaps some Men will be apt to say, that it is an easy matter to make Harangues, and say fine things, in the theory, of the righteous Man's fearlessness and contempt of death; but how doth this matter really stand in fact? Doth our experience convince us that good Men, when they come to dye, are so perfectly indifferent and unconcern'd, so full of peace, and hope and joy, as we have represented them? Or rather, doth it not convince us that many, that pass with us for good Men, seem to be as timorous and apprehensive of death,

death, and to hanker after and be as fond of life, as other Men? And what account can we be able to give of this, or how can we make it consistent with what has been already said upon this head? To this I answer,

First, That the very highest things, which I have any where said in this Discourse, of the righteous Man's fearlessness and contempt of Death, and of his peace, and hope and joy in it, have been many times actually exemplify'd in the deaths of good Men. Witness that Noble Army of Martyrs, who more cheerfully resign'd their Lives, and their Judges and Executioners could take them from them; who, in the midst of their health and strength and all other Circumstances that might make life desirable, voluntarily offer'd themselves to death, nay even courted it and sought for it, as an high privilege and peculiar happiness; and who, in the midst of the most lingering, painful and tormenting kinds of death, held out with the most undaunted courage and resolution, and at last expir'd, in smiles in hymns of thanks and praise to God, in raptures and ecstasies. And, least this should be thought a very extraordinary case. Witness all those many pious Souls, within our own knowledge (more especially within ours who are Ministers of the Gospel, and whose business it is to attend upon sick and dying persons) who have declar'd to us, both in word and deed, upon their death beds, their entire willingness to leave this present world, and inexpressible joy and comfort which they felt in the hope and prospect of a better. And, if this be not always the case with those, that appear to us to be righteous, there are, doubtless, very good reasons to be assign'd for it, which will not in the least derogate from that power, which I have attributed to Righteousness, of arming us against the fears of death, nay and even making it easy and comfortable to us.

As
First, That we are often mistaken in our accounts of Men, and take those for righteous, who, upon a very slight observation outwardly appear to us to be so, who yet perhaps are guilty of such secret sins, as make them know themselves to be far otherwise. And then it is no wonder if these Men, when they come to dye, are very much disturb'd and uneasy, upon account of those sins, which, tho' hidden from the eyes of others, are so very legible to their own Consciences. And this must needs appear very odd and strange to us, while we are

ignorant

ignorant of the true cause of it, but answers it self, as soon as
ever rightly understood.

Secondly, That among those who really are, generally speaking, good Men, there are but few, very few, that are so good as they should be. But few, that do what they can and ought, to take of their affections from this world, to make up their accounts with it, and prepare themselves for their departure out of it. But few, that lead lives pretty much abstracted from flesh and sense, and use their utmost endeavours, to give their minds the most deep and lasting Impressions, which they are able, of the future and invisible things of another World. And, this being so, it cannot possibly be otherwise, but that they must sometimes be surpriz'd and disorder'd by death; but then this is apparently their own fault and not any deficiency in Righteousness or Religion, whose Rules had they but strictly follow'd, as they might and ought to have done, they would not be, upon their Death beds, in that hurry and confusion, that concern and trouble, in which they too often find themselves. And this Consideration should make us all, even the very best of us, extremely careful to think of, and live under constant and habitual preparation for, death, in the time of our health and strength; that so we may be always ready, at what time soever our Lord shall call us, and have little else to do, than to resign our Souls into the hand of God, as into to the hands of a most faithful Creator.

Thirdly, This very often happens from bodily melancholy, which is apt to make good Men think a great deal worse of their spiritual State and Condition, than they really deserve, and so to fill them with unreasonable and groundless Fears, jealousies and suspicious concerning them; or else from the distempers which bring them to their Death-beds, which frequently so dispirit and enfeeble them, that they seem to have lost all manner of heart and courage, and to be even troubled and uneasy: and these, which are only natural indispositions, some Men are very willing to misconstrue moral ones; or it may be from their concern for their poor families, who are like to lose their main, if not only, humane stay and support in them, and to be put to very great straits and difficulties, when they are gone; or lastly from the impressions which, at such time more especially, the grief of their dearest friends and relations, which is so plainly to be heard and seen all about them, is apt to make upon them (a cruel and unseasonable kindness

this, in our friends, I must observe by the way, however well meant, thus to discompose our thoughts, and divide our affections, which ought now wholly to be set Heaven-wards: thus to catch at us, and hold us fast, when we must of necessity be going: and, by so doing, to make this last tug and conflict of nature, in which, God knows, they ought much rather to assist than hinder us, still more and more difficult.) But the same answer will serve to all these, viz. either that these are accidental Circumstances, not necessarily belonging to death, as death, and so do not fall within our present Consideration: or, that, so far as they are necessary, they take advantage of the weaknesses and infirmities of good Men, and make them seem to own such a fear of death, as they themselves, in a sound state of mind, would utterly detest and abhor.

Lastly, After we have said all that we can, there is such a natural aversion in Men to death, resulting from that intimate union, which is between our Souls and Bodies, as it will be extremely difficult to suppress and conquer so far: that there shall appear no manner of regret and reluctancy, even in good Men, when they come to dye. Nature will struggle to the last, even whither we will or no, and this struggle of hers may look something like an unwillingness in good Men to dye, when it really is not so; as is plain from the declarations of good Men themselves who, under all this struggle and conflict of nature, do frequently profess an entire willingness to be dissolv'd, and, as far as such a troublesome conflict will permit, give proof of the sincerity of these their professions, by all the outward expressions of contentment, joy and satisfaction, that can in reason be expected. Even St. Paul himself, who earnestly desir'd to be dissolv'd and to be with Christ, yet was so apprehensive of some sort of trouble, that he must undergo in putting off his body: that he wish'd that he were not to be *unclothed* but cloth'd upon, with that house which is from Heaven. 2 Cor. 5. 4. Nay, and in our blessed Lord himself, at the near approach of his death (which yet we are sure he was perfectly resolv'd upon, satisfy'd in, and pleas'd with) his humane nature seem'd to shrink and draw back a little, and made him pray to his Father that, *if it were possible, that cup might pass from him*. Mat. 26. 39. Two plain proofs that we must not judge good Men to be fearful and unwilling to dye, only because we see some sort of struggling and reluctancy in them, as death draw near: these being very often the pure effects of nature, and

by no means signs of the inward sense and desires of their Souls.

The sum of all then is this: either that what Men are apt to think a fearfulness and unwillingness in good Men to dye, is not really so, or that, if it be, yet that it is not upon account of death, consider'd purely as death, but upon account of some peculiar unhappy outward Circumstances, that attend it, and help to make it more terrible, than, in it self, it would be or else that it proceeds from bodily distempers and infirmities: or lastly, that it is owing to a want of that due strictness and exact care of our Lives, which Religion requires at our hands. And that, to whatever other cause it may be imputed, it can never be imputed to any want of power in righteousness or Religion to arm us against these fears, and to make us more than conquerors over this King of Terrors.

I proceed to enquire.

Secondly, How those Men ought to live, who expect and desire to dye a righteous Man's death; and the answer to this is very plain and short, that they must live a righteous Man's life. That they must live *soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world, and keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards Man*; and especially that they must frequently exercise themselves in those Duties, which have a more immediate tendency to fit and prepare them for death, such as *self-denial, Mortification, Retirement, Heavenly mindedness, Prayer, reading good Books, &c.* And that no other way but this will do is evident, because all the joys and comforts of a righteous Man upon his Death-bed; and all his happiness after death, are the natural and judicial effects and consequences of his good Life. *Peace*, as the Prophet *Isaiah* well observes, *is the work of righteousness, and the effect of it quietness and assurance for ever.* Isa. 32. 17. Because the righteous Man hath accustom'd himself to despise this world, to live above it, and to be a stranger to it, therefore can he, with great ease, part with it. Because he has understood the worth and excellency of the Soul, above that of the Body, and has led a spiritual Life, and has chiefly delighted in and valu'd spiritual Pleasures; therefore can he put off his body, without any great unwillingness, and go with joy and comfort into the world of Spirits. Lastly, because he hath made it his constant care to behave himself so, upon all accounts, as he knew would render him most acceptable to God, and intitle him to the

the Blessings of another life, promis'd by his Son Jesus Christ, in the Gospel; therefore can he enter upon this new life, with the greatest cheerfulness and alacrity imaginable, with *joy unspeakable and full of Glory.*

And, for the same reason, because the wicked Man has all along plac'd his utmost hope and happiness in this World and the things of it; therefore can he not ever be willing to leave it, but must be even forc'd and torn, with violence, from it. Because he has accustom'd himself to relish none but bodily pleasures, and has never had any right tast or apprehension of spiritual ones, therefore will he dread the thoughts of being stripp'd of his belov'd body, and becoming all Spirit, that is, according to his notions of things, all misery: Once more, because he has liv'd so as to have provok'd God, and to have drawn upon himself all the miseries of that future State, threaten'd against Sinners in the Gospel; therefore must he necessarily dread the entering into this future State: this State to him, of certain and everlasting Woe and Torment.

As well then may we expect to *gather grapes from Thorns, or figs from Thistles*, as the comforts and blessings of a righteous Man's death, from an unrighteous Man's life. No, the natures of all things, nay even of God himself, must be first chang'd; the promises and threatnings of the Gospel must be quite alter'd, and made directly contrary to what they now are; Causes must produce effects, not only not like themselves, but the most different and unlike that possibly can be. Contradictions must be all reconcil'd, absurdities all vanish: Light must become Darkness, and Heaven Hell, before this can possibly come to pass.

I deny not but that an unrighteous life, may possibly end well and comfortably at the last, in an happy Repentance, I mean such a Repentance, as has been begun some considerable time, before our death and has given us, by its repeated good fruits, reasonable hopes and assurances of its having been sincere, and having wrought a thorough change and amendment in us. But as for a Death bed Repentance (whatever uncovenanted mercy God may have in store for it, which, tho' we shall not take upon us to limit, yet we are sure it cannot become sinners to presume upon: or however we may be forc'd sometimes to advise Men to it, as the best thing which they can do, when they have brought themselves to this miserable shift) yet thus much we may safely say of it, that it cannot possibly give us the peace and hope and joy

of a righteous mans death; and that, for two very substantial reasons, both because we cannot be sure that a Dead-bed Repentance shall be accepted of God, altho' it be sincere: and because, tho' we were sure of this, yet it is impossible for us, in this World, to be sure of the sincerity of it.

O let us then all make hast to repent, in our health and strength, while there are hopes, that we may live to see the habitual effects of our Repentance, by which alone we can be able to judge of its sincerity, and consequently its availableness. And, if we are not so happy as to be of the number of those righteous Persons who need no Repentance, yet at least let us be of the number of those happy penitents, who *turn to the Lord, while he may be found*, and who, finding him, shall find in him every thing that their Souls can thirst after or long for. But this belongs properly to,

My third and last head, under which I am to exhort all Men to use their utmost endeavours so to live, that they may not fail of *dying a righteous man's death*. And, for this purpose, I have but just time to put you in mind, that you cannot live with any tolerable ease and contentment even in this world, nor enjoy the pleasures of it, such as they are, to the best advantage, without having first taken care of this. For the fear of Death is a most slavish fear, and will all our lives long keep us in bondage, will mingle with and embitter all our Pleasures, take off the edge, and spoil the relish of all our Enjoyments. That the way to live long is to live so, that we may not fear Death, it being the fear of this which inflames and heightens all our Distempers, and very often kills us, when they would not. That, when we come to dye, we shall stand in the utmost need of all the joys and comforts of Religion to support our faint and drooping Spirits: that we shall then be willing to purchase them, at any rate, whereas they are now easy to be had: and, oh dreadful reflection! that they will not then be to be purchas'd, even tho' we were able to give the whole world for them. And that, after death (supposing that we should repent upon our Death-beds) it is highly improbable that our Repentance will avail us any thing; and, if not, we must be utterly lost and undone for ever, *Oh that men were wise, that they would think upon these things, that they would consider their latter end.* Deut. 32. 29.

And so most Men will be apt to tell us that they do, and that, tho' they at are present engag'd in the ways of sin, yet

they fully design to draw off in time, to find a place for Repentance, and so to bring all right at the last. And truly I am very apt to believe, that most wicked Men do so design. But what reason then, in God's name, can they give, why they should delay so much as one moment, to put this wise and important design in Execution; Why they should not make all the hast, that possibly they can, to give themselves the unspeakable comfort and satisfaction of living without the fear of Death? Why they should leave this most grand and momentous of all concernments, to innumerable hazards and uncertainties, and not instantly secure it? Oh! how much wiser can they be, in matters of infinitely lesser value, how seldom do they act thus, in their worldly Affairs?

I shall conclude all with the advice of the Son of Sirach Ecclus. 18. 21, 22. 14. 13, 14. 5. 7. 14. 12. — *Humble thy self before thou be sick, and in the time of sins, shew repentance. Let nothing hinder thee to pay thy vow in due time, and defer not till death, to be justify'd. Do good before thou dye and according to thy ability, stretch forth thy hand. Defraud not thy self of the good days, let not the part of a good desire over pass thee. Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from day to day: for suddenly shall the wrath of the Lord come forth and in thy security thou shalt be destroy'd, and perish in the Day of Vengeance. Remember hat death will not be long in coming, and that the Covenant of the Grave has not been shew'd unto thee.*

God grant that we may seriously lay these things to heart, and learn to live every day, more and more to *his* Glory, and our own eternal Salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A good
we
either.

A good Conscience a pledge of future Happiness.

S E R M O N XII.

I JOHN 3. 21.

Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have me confidence towards God.

AT the 18th. and 19th. verses of this Chapter, we find the Apostle recommending to Christians a sincere and effectual love of their Brethren, not *in word and in tongue only*, but *in deed and in truth*, from this following Consideration; viz. that such a love as this would be one sure mark and proof of their being true Christians, and, provided they should be deficient in no other part of their duty, would give them a humble trust and confidence of their being in a state of grace and favour with God. Hereby, saith the Apostle, that is by this love, we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure, or rather persuade, our hearts or consciences before God. And, in order to make this appear to be, as indeed it is, a consideration of the highest moment and importance, and which consequently ought to have a most powerful influence upon us; he immediately adds, that such an assurance or persuasion of our Consciences, if this, would be a comfortable and hopeful pledge and earnest of a favourable Sentence from God, at the day of Judgment. For, as on the one hand, if our heart condemn us, we have all the reason in the world to fear, that God will condemn us (because, as the Apostle observes, *God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*: He knoweth us much better than we do our selves: and those faults for which we condemn our selves, and many others as bad or worse, which may probably have escap'd us, cannot possibly be hid from his all-seeing Eye) so, on the other hand, *if our hearts condemn us not, then we have confidence towards God*, that he will not condemn us either.

Thus much for the relation which these words have to the context; let us now come to consider them in themselves more closely: And indeed there is very great reason so to do, since, what through the unreasonable scrupulosity of some, and the high conceitedness and presumption of others, there is hardly any one part of these words, but what has been grievously wrested and misunderstood. Nay, and which is yet infinitely worse, the very end and design of the Apostle in them has been utterly defeated and perverted; and, instead of being, as he no doubt intended them, and encouragement to all manner of virtue and goodness, they have too too often been made, on the direct contrary, a convert and excuse for all manner of sin and wickedness. To prevent all which, as far as we are able for the future: we must beg of you seriously to attend to the following particulars, in which, we hope you will find the true sense and full meaning of these words.

First, that these words are not to be understood absolutely as if every Man, whose Conscience doth not fly in his face, and tell him, even without asking, that he is in a state of condemnation, may have confidence towards God. For it is notorious to all the world, that there are a great many vile and profligate Sinners whose consciences (being unnaturally stupified and lull'd to sleep, by the power of drink and lust, and a constant heat and hurry of sinning: or being judicially fear'd and harden'd by God: or, at least, being perfectly neglected and, not only never consulted, but even not so much as hearken'd to, when they would speak of themselves) do not condemn them or perhaps not appear to them so to do, who yet we are very sure, cannot possibly have any, the least, ground of confidence towards God. And therefore we must necessarily take these words with some restraint, with some such limitation as this: that if, after a full and impartial tryal and examination of our selves, our consciences shall find no reason to condemn us, then we may have confidence towards God. That this must be the meaning of these words, seems to me very plain from the reason of the thing it self: it being impossible that any judgment, that we can make of our selves, should be right and just, and consequently such as God will ratify and confirm, and which we may therefore have hope and confidence in, without such a previous Tryal and examination of this. And besides, the word, [κατακριθῆναι.] which we here translate condemn, doth properly signify to condemn, after

full and fair cognizance and examination of the cause. And the Scripture plainly tells us that we must first *prove or try our own works*, before we can have *rejoycing in our selves*; Gal. 6. 3, 4. and that, if we do not this, we shall be apt to *think our selves to be something, when we are nothing*, and, by so doing, *to deceive our selves*.

Secondly, That, by our Hearts or Consciences condemning us not, we are not to understand that our Consciences must find no manner of fault, with our past lives, in any respect; in this sense there is no man living, whose Conscience must not condemn him: there being no man upon earth, as *Solomon* observes, *who sinneth not*, 1 Kings 8. 46. or, as *St. James*, who doth not, thro' ignorance or infirmity, *surprize or unweariness, offend in many things*. Jam. 3. 2. But the main thing, that we are to be concern'd for, is, that our consciences may not have any just ground to accuse us of having liv'd in any wilful habit of sins of any kind, whither of deed, word or thought, whither of commission or omission; nay, nor so much as of any single deliberate act of sin, much less of any very gross and enormous sins, which are, by many *Cajusts* reckon'd equivalent to an whole habit of lesser sins; at least that they may not be able to accuse us of any of these unrepented of and unforsoaken: nay, or even so lately repented of and forsoaken, that, as yet, there can hardly have been time enough to have given proof of the sincerity of our repentance, by a constant and steady series of works meet for it. Where ever this is really and truly the case, there is no question at all to be made, but that the Man whose case, it is, is, according to the terms of the Gospel, in a state of salvation: and consequently, when ever our consciences are really perswaded, upon a full and impartial examination of our selves, that this is truly our case, this must be sufficient to give us confidence towards God, or hope that we are in a state of grace and favour with him, that is in other words, in a state of salvation.

Lastly, By the confidence here spoken of (supposing it, as I have all along done, to relate to our spiritual estate, and not merely to the acceptance of our prayers with God, as some would have it: of which more anon) I do by no means understand an absolut certainty and infallible assurance of our being in a state of salvation, but only a good degree of hope, and of moral assurance, concerning this. And my reason is, because the ground of this assurance, which is our tryal and
examina-

examination of our selves, is but a fallible, and in some sense, uncertain ground ; it is possible we may be deceiv'd in it, and then we must necessarily be deceiv'd in the inferences which we make from it. And hence it is that St. Paul tells us that, altho' he *knew nothing by himself*, 1 Cor. 4. 4. or could find no fault with himself, yet was he not thereby justify'd ; he might possibly be mistaken in his judgment of himself, and therefore did not look upon it as an absolute justification of him. However that, from a tryal and examination of our selves made with due care and attention, we may have sufficient ground of hope that we are in a state of grace and favour with God, is plain : not only from the reason of the thing it self, which teacheth us that this is a very probable way of coming to a right knowledge of our state and condition : but also from the words of the same Apostle in other places, which assure us, that his *rejoycing was this, the testimony of his conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity he had had his conversation in the world* ; 2 Cor. 1. 14. and that it was his consciousness of his having fought a good fight, having finish'd his course, and having kept the faith, which made him speak, with so much confidence, of *a crown of righteousness laid up for him*. 2 Tim. 4. 7. And St. Peter expressly tells us that the *answer of a good conscience*, 1 Pet. 3. 21. its answer, as the word properly signifies, after due questioning and examination, saves us. And, as I just now observed, we are commanded to prove our own works, for this very reason, that *thereby we may have rejoycing in our selves*.

These particulars being admitted, the plain sense of the Apostles words will be this : that if, after a full and impartial tryal and examination of our past Lives, our consciences shall find reason to conclude that we have liv'd so, either as righteous Persons or as penitents, as becomes the Gospel of Christ ; we may then have a good degree of hope, nay even some sort of modest confidence and assurance, that we are in a state of salvation.

So that the things which seem chiefly to concern us, from these words thus explain'd, are

First, To know, when we may be said to have made such a full and impartial tryal and examination of our selves, that if, upon such tryal and examination our Consciences do not condemn us, we may have confidence towards God.

Secondly

Secondly, How we may be best able to make this tryal and examination of our selves. And

Lastly, To enquire a little particularly into the nature of that confidence, which those, who have made this tryal and examination of themselves, may have towards God, if their consciences do not condemn them.

First, To know when we may be said to have made such full and impartial tryal and examination, of our selves, that upon such tryal and examination, our consciences do not condemn us, we may have confidence towards God. Now when we may be said to have done this? when

First, We have done our utmost to give our selves a clear and full knowledge of our state and condition. And

Secondly, Have likewise taken due care to inform and instruct our selves, in a right and perfect understanding of that Rule by which our state and condition are to be try'd. And

Lastly, Have faithfully and impartially apply'd this Rule to our state and condition, and without any, the least, favour or affection, judg'd our selves by it.

These three things, a full and clear knowledge of the cause that is to be judg'd, as also of that Rule, by which it is to be judg'd, and an honest and unbiass'd application of this Rule to our cause, are all that is requisite in order to our forming a right judgment in any cause; And, omitting any one of these, it will be impossible for us to judge right of any, even cases of the least moment. And therefore, to be sure, no one of them must be omitted by us, in the case before us, which is of such vast moment, that the consequence of our judging rightly, or otherwise, in it, may be no less than everlasting happiness or misery.

First, We must do our utmost to give our selves a clear and full knowledge of our own state and condition. And this is no more, than what we our selves own to be necessary, in all other cases. If we go to Council to have any civil doubts resolv'd: the first thing, which we are careful to do, is to prepare a true state of our case; and, according as this is more or less perfect, the judgment upon it must, of necessary consequence, be more or less perfect too. For a Man can make his judgment, only according to what appears to him; and therefore, if all doth not appear that should, or at least doth not appear in its true and proper Light, the judgment, tho' good as to what appears, yet must needs be wrong or deficient, as

to the real and intrinsic merits of the cause. And just so will it be in our present case; we are to make a judgment concerning our past Lives; and how can we do this, without knowing what our past Lives have been? Nay, we are to make a judgment so exactly true and right, that we may have reason to hope that, even that most just Judge, God himself will confirm it; and therefore certainly the most perfect and complete knowledge of our selves, that we can attain unto, is absolutely needful. And, till we can be sure that we have done all, that is in our power, towards the attaining of such a knowledge, we cannot see how we can any way satisfy our own reason, that we have done what is requisite, towards a full and impartial Tryal and Examination of our selves.

But I would not willingly be misunderstood upon this Head. When I say that we must do our utmost, to give our selves a full and clear knowledge of our state and condition, I do not mean that we are to recollect all our past thoughts, words and actions: for this is impossible; nay nor yet, that we are bound in a more general sense, to review the whole course of our past lives: but only so much of them, as may be sufficient to give us a clear and undoubted Satisfaction, whether we are at present, and, for some considerable time, last past, have been in a firm and entire disposition of mind, to serve and please God, in all things, or no. This is the main point, which concerns us to be secure of: And therefore, tho' I would by no means defraud Holy Souls of that unspeakable joy and confirmation of hope, which, the blessed review of an whole Life well-spent, and of an universal Obedience almost in every thought, word and work, must needs fill them with; yet, considering that this is the case but of very few, and that, tho' it be a very desirable case, yet it is not absolutely necessary, in order to our Salvation; I cannot think fit to represent it as such; to the raising of scruples in weak minds, and making the work of Self-examination, which is at best hard enough, still more and more difficult and perplex'd.

Secondly, We must be careful likewise duly to inform and instruct our selves, in a right and perfect understanding of that Rule, by which our state and condition are to be try'd. In our secular Affairs we take care, as near as we can, to choose a Man perfectly well vers'd in the knowledge of the Law, for the resolver of our Law-cases. And this surely with great reason; since it is impossible for a Man, who is ignorant

so will not, tho' but in part, what the Law is, to determine certainly
 whether our case is according to Law or no. And doth not the
 knowledge of the Law hold just the same; and ought we not to be at least,
 as prudent in our spiritual Affairs, as in our secular? The
 reason and Question, which our Consciences desire to be resolv'd
 is, whether our late Course of Life has been such, as we
 have reason to believe God has been pleas'd with? that is, in
 other words, whether it has been according to that rule of Life,
 which God has given us to walk by, viz. the dictates of our
 reason and nature, and his written word. And how
 can we possibly resolve this, without a thorough knowledge
 and understanding of what this Rule is? I say, a thorough
 knowledge and understand: because, if we know but in part,
 we may perhaps be condemned by that part of our Rule
 which we do not know, even when we are acquitted by that
 part of it which we do know. It is plain then that an entire
 knowledge of the Rule or Law, by which we are to be
 judg'd, is absolutely necessary, in order to our making a just
 and adequate judgment of our selves; and consequently we
 cannot, so much as, hope that we have made such a judg-
 ment, till we have us'd our utmost care to acquire such know-
 ledge.

And please me, *lastly*, Be our knowledge, both of our selves and of our
 Rule, as perfect and compleat as we need to desire they shou'd
 be, yet still, if we do not honestly and impartially apply this
 knowledge thus thoroughly understood, to the state and condition
 of our lives thus faithfully represented, we may, after all, be
 far from a true and just judgment of our selves. These
 are indeed admirable qualifications for a Judge; but what
 they signify, if not sincerely and uprightly us'd: if, thro'
 our fear or affection, thro' fear or an unwillingness to believe
 the truth, we put a more loose and easy construction, either
 on the state of our lives, or the sense of our Rule, than they
 really bear? To what purpose is it that we know right
 from wrong, if, after all, we may be so far corrupted and pre-
 judiced upon as to judge wrong to be right? who can have any
 dependence, in the least, upon the Sentence of such
 Judges? What shadow of probability is there, that God should
 approve and confirm their Judgment?

Well then; be it agreed that the foremention'd qualificati-
 ons are absolutely necessary, in order to our forming such a
 true and just Judgment of our selves, as may, if in our favour,
 give

give us confidence towards God; yet still the greatest difficulty behind, and that is, to know

Secondly, How we may be best able to make this Judgment. And here it cannot be deny'd but that, where Men have been so careless as to let their Accounts run on a great while without ever casting them up, there it must needs be a matter of great difficulty and perplexity at last to settle them. But yet, as great as this great difficulty is, it might in time be surmount'd, if we could but once persuade Men, when they are about to begin this work, to be honest and true to themselves, willing and resolv'd to know the very worst of their condition, and rather to be severe upon, than to flatter, themselves; to be serious and attentive, to allow time and thought enough, for this great and important work; and, above all, earnestly to implore the divine direction and assistance in it. And, that they may not fail of this, I shall make it my

First, Instruction to them, before they set about this work, to consider seriously with themselves, how great and important a work it is, and of how fatal consequence any mistake in it may prove: how it is all to be review'd and scann'd again, at the strict and unerring Tribunal of God himself; how little it will avail us to acquit our selves here, unless we do it upon such sure grounds, as God shall likewise acquit us upon hereafter, for *not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth*: 2 Cor. 10. 18. and who is a miserable cheat it will be upon our selves, to construe our selves better and sifer than indeed we are, and, by so doing, to keep our selves from becoming so good and so safe, as we might and ought to, be. And, by these and such like Considerations, to excite and quicken our caution, our attention, our diligence, our integrity, our impartiality, and our earnestness for the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. And, thus prepared we may very hopefully.

Secondly, Begin this tryal and examination of our selves, which will best be done, by taking to our selves some summary of our Christian Duty, distinctly and particularly digested under proper heads, and questioning our selves, under each of these Heads, how we have perform'd or neglected each duty; more especially, how we have done or omitted it of late. The more exact and particular our Summary shall be (and this you had best advise with your spiritual Teachers) to make the better; because it will be the greater help to our memory;

in recollecting the account of our past lives: the more perfect, and consequently the more satisfactory, Rule to judge of our selves by. And let us not content our selves with doing this once or twice only, but let us do it again and again, at different times, and in different tempers, with the utmost reflection and intentness of mind, and with an earnest desire and resolution to sift and search our lives to the very bottom. And let us be sure to take special notice, as we go along, of those heads of Duty, under which we shall find our selves to have been faulty, and to put them to together by themselves, as also all the circumstances of aggravation or extenuation belonging to them, as near as we can remember: that so we may go over them again by themselves, and endeavour thoroughly to understand how our state is, in respect of them.

And more particularly ought we to insist upon those Duties which do most nearly concern us, as being proper to our Stations and circumstances of Life, and which therefore we are, in a peculiar manner, answerable for; as also upon such, as will most plainly and directly prove us to have had, all along, a sincere sense of, and regard to, the obligations which Religion lays upon us; such as, private Prayer and Meditation, secret Alms-giving, doing Justice to our own loss, and of our own accord, where no human power could have forc'd us,

And if, after such a serious, and particular, and often repeated examination of our selves as this, we shall plainly find, that we have constantly, for some time at least liv'd in the practice of the last mention'd Duties or such like, which nothing but a true sense of Religion could possibly engage us to: and that as to all other Duties, more particularly such as are proper to our peculiar Stations and Circumstances, we have not wilfully transgress'd them, much less have accusom'd our selves so to do, or at least have, sometime ago, heartily repented of these our Transgressions, and walk'd more warily and uprightly ever since. If this, or the contrary doth evidently appear: here seems to be very good Ground and Authority, the best which humanely speaking, we can have, to acquit or condemn our selves accordingly.

But if the case be doubtful, which is indeed most commonly the case of mankind, who sin and repent, and repent and sin again so very frequently, and lead such mix'd and uncertain lives; that it is hard to determine which is the more prevail-

ing

ing principle in them, Sin or Religion. If this, I say, be the case; it is demonstrable that we cannot come to any settled judgment about it: because there is not any settled ground for such judgment. And therefore all that we can do, in this case, is to advise these Men to live more certainly and steadily for the future, to hold better to their repentance, and by so doing, to make it a good ground of hope concerning their spiritual condition. And then we shall be very ready to speak peace to them; and their own Consciences will admit them to be partakers of that confidence towards God, which I am now

Thirdly and Lastly, To enquire a little more particularly into the nature of. And here I desire it may be remember'd, that I before hinted that, by *confidence towards God*, some would have no more meant, than a confidence that God will hear our prayers; and that chiefly, because it follows immediately in the next verse, *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.* Now, tho' I readily grant that this may be a good Argument, that this was part of the Apostles meaning (tho' these words may be likewise and additional Consideration by themselves, and have no relation to the confidence mention'd in the fore-going verse) yet I can, by no means allow it to be a good Argument, that this ~~was~~ the whole of it. On the contrary, the Apostles speaking, v. 28. in the proceeding Chapter, of such a confidence, as shall keep us from being *asham'd before our Saviour, at his coming to judge the world*: and, at the 19th verse of this Chapter, of assuring or perswading our hearts and Consciences before God: and his making an opposition, in the 20th and 21st verses, between God's condemning us with respect to our spiritual Estate, and our having *confidence towards God*: are to me an undeniable evidence, that, by the confidence here spoken of, he must mean a confidence with relation to our spiritual Estate. But this dispute may soon be cut short, by considering that this Confidence, that God will accept our Prayers must be grounded upon a confidence that we are in a state of Grace and Favour with God (and this reason the Apostle gives for it in this very place, *because we do those things, which are pleasing in his sight*) and consequently this notion of a confidence with respect to our spiritual Estate, is, at least, included and imply'd in that other notion of it, which relates to the acceptance of our Prayers.

And this Confidence I take to be nothing else, but a good degree of hope, or, at the highest, of moral assurance, that we are in a state of grace and favour with God; a degree, I say, proportionable to that Evidence, whatever it be, which our consciences have of our having *kept God's commandments, and done those things which are pleasing in his sight*. And because (by reason of the great variety, mixedness and uncertainty of our lives, the deceitfulness of our hearts, the treacherousness of our memories, and our excessive love of, and partiality towards, our selves) we cannot, ordinarily speaking, have from our Consciences an absolute certainty and infallible assurance, that we have thus *kept God's commandments, and done those things which are pleasing in his sight*: therefore, I say that we cannot, ordinarily speaking, attain to an absolute certainty and infallible assurance of our being in a state of grace and favour with God, that is, a state of salvation.

'Tis true indeed that, in extraordinary cases, as those of suffering to any great degree for the sake of Christ, and, much more, of *laying down our lives for him*, there is such a plain and undoubted evidence of our loving God above all things, and our willingness and desire to serve and glorify him, at any cost and pains, as must needs give us a plain and undoubted assurance of our *doing those things which are pleasing in his sight*, and consequently of our being in a state of grace, and favour with him. And accordingly we find that this was the main ground of St. Paul's confidence and positive assurance of his salvation: *I am ready, saith he, to be offer'd up, and the time of my departure is at hand. Henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of righteousness.* 2 Tim. 4. 6, 8. And Divines have generally agreed, that upon this single transcendent act of love and zeal for God and our Saviour, the offering our selves to death for them, Men might reasonably found and undoubted assurance of their being in a state of salvation. But, excepting these and such like extraordinary cases, I cannot see how good Men can ordinarily attain to an absolute certainty and infallible assurance of their Salvation. Unless it can be prov'd, that God has any where promis'd, ordinarily to inspire good Men with such an assurance: which, I confess, I know nothing of.

No? some Men will be apt to say; What then is the meaning of that *seal, pledge and earnest of the spirit*; and of the *spirits bearing witness with our spirit that we are the Children of God*;

God; and of that *Plerophory*, that full assurance and much assurance, as we translate it, so often mention'd in Scripture?

To this I answer that, by all those expressions concerning the holy spirit, probably no more was meant, than the confirmation which the holy spirit gave to the truth of the Christian Religion, by its inward operation on the minds of Christians directing, exciting and assisting them to persevere in the faithful profession of it, and filling them with hope and joy unspeakable, in so doing. And farther that, whatever else might be meant by these phrases, which it is not my business, neither have I time, now to enquire, it is certain, from their being applyed to all Christians in general, as they constantly are in Scripture, that they could not mean an assurance from God that they should all actually be sav'd. And, as for the *Plerophory* or fulness of assurance mention in Scripture, it is never so much as once us'd, with relation to the salvation of particular persons: or indeed, if it were, could signify any more, than the fulness of their persuasion or belief that they should be sav'd (which is the utmost sense of the word) but by no means, an absolute certainty, or infallible assurance, of this.

And we are very far from asserting, that in this sense, good Men may not have a full and firm persuasion of their salvation: those of them, I mean, who have liv'd so very circumspectly and exactly, that they may be more than ordinarily sure of their having walk'd so as to have pleas'd God: and having been guilty of very few errors and mistakes, have very little to make them doubtful, and to take off from this assurance. Nay, we will go yet farther, and allow that in extraordinary cases, as those above-mention'd of Martyrdom, &c. God has often vouchsafed infallibly to assure particular person of their salvation: and probably in the like cases, where such a support and comfort seem very needful, may do so again. But then we say, that this is not the ordinary way of God's dealing with Mankind: that he has no where promis'd any such thing, and that our frequent experience of good Mens wont of it, even at the hour of death, when it seeme most needful in the ordinary course of things, doth abundantly prove that he doth not ordinarily bestow it. And we heartily wish that, where this is pretended to, it be not very often from an evil spirit rather than from the good spirit of God: it being but too too visible, that a great many, who pretend to it, have not those

other

other signs, which ought to accompany it, of their being God's Children. But, to apply what has been said.

First, Hence it appears what a weak and impertinent excuse it is, in many Men, to say, when they are tax'd of any fault, that their *conscience doth not condemn* them for it; when, at the same time, it is most palpable and notorious, either that they have examin'd their Consciences but slightly or superficially about it, or have not examin'd them at all: nay, perhaps have refus'd to hear, what they have, of their own accord, offered to say to them, and have even violently stopp'd their mouths, that they might not speak. Conscience, as you have seen, is never a good excuse, but where it has been duly inform'd and instructed, has been suffer'd to act without impediment or prejudice, has taken time and pains to consider things well and thoroughly, and has form'd its judgment of any cause upon the best evidence and fullest knowledge, which it could possibly get, of the cause it self. And yet alas! how often is Conscience made an excuse for things, which Men know little or nothing of: for things which, to be sure, they have never thoroughly weigh'd and examin'd, as they ought to have done?

Secondly, Hence we see plainly what an excellent and useful thing self-examination is, when rightly perform'd: by which alone we can resolve our selves, in that most important of all questions, *whither we are in a state of salvation or no*: and accordingly, either take encouragement to continue in the way, in which we are, or caution, with all possible speed, to get into a better: as also, what a difficult and intricate work this is made, by putting it off and delaying it. And that is the natural inference from hence, but that, for the future, we should become very frequent and exact, in the performance of it? Especially, considering that our Holy Church has set apart several portions of our time for this very purpose, and has taken sufficient care to warn and instruct us, to apply these sacred Seasons. Such are its Fasts and Vigils: the week before the administration of the holy Sacrament: the whole time of Lent, and more particularly, the Holy week, or the week, as we commonly call it, our Saviour's Passion. And surely we, who are so eager to embrace all opportunities of stating our secular accounts, cannot, for shame, slip these blessed opportunities of settling an account, which

doth infinitely more nearly concern us, even the account of our immortal Souls.

Thirdly, Hence we learn what an uncharitable, unjust and unreasonable thing it is, to censure good Men, such as thro' their whole conversation have appear'd to us to be so, as to their final condition: to speak hardly of them, nay, as some are bold enough to do, to pronounce positively that they cannot be sav'd, only because they dare not declare themselves absolutely sure of their salvation; as also, what little reason we our selves have to be disturb'd and disquieted at such censures. As long as there is such a mixture, as there is even in the Lives of very good Men, of errours and mistakes, with their righteousness: as long as there is modesty, and humility, and diffidence of our selves in the World, (and this will be, as long as Religion it self continues in it) so long there will always be some little mixture of fear and doubtfulness, even in the hopes of good Men concerning their salvation. However, this ought to be an hint to good Men to walk still more carefully and circumspectly: that they may use all diligence to make their calling and election sure, and have as little damp and allay, to this glorious hope, as is possible.

Lastly, Hence we cannot but infer, what a comfortable and desirable thing a good Conscience is. *Blessed is the Man* (saith the Son of Sirach) *whose conscience hath not condemn'd him, and who is not fall'n from his hope in the Lord.* Ecclus. 14. 2. *Whither a man be rich, or whither a man be poor, if he have a good heart towards the Lord, he shall at all times rejoyce with a cheerful countenance.* 26. 4. Blessed Souls indeed! who can thus rejoyce in the Lord evermore: who enjoy constant peace and complacency of mind here, and these too as an hopeful pledge and earnest of everlasting peace and happiness hereafter: who, tho' the pillars of the world should be shaken, tho' Death should stare them in the face, or the last dreadful Trumpet should summon them to judgment, yet would they not be dismay'd but, with an humble and modest confidence put their trust in the Lord, and hope and stand fast in his Mercy. Blessed, Blessed Souls! who already feed upon food of Angels upon the delicious foretastes of the Heavenly Manna: whose hearts the Kingdom of Heaven is already begun, and shall be daily growing and improving, till it attain its perfect consummation in bliss and glory, in Heaven.

O what would we not give for this *pearl of great price*, of inestimable value, a good Conscience? Alas! there is no need of giving much for it. Let us but live agreeably to our own nature and reason, and sincerely endeavour to please God in Christ Jesus; and we already have it. To sum up all, in the Apostles words: *Finally, Brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if their be any vertue, and if there be any praise, think on these things*, Phil. 4. 8.

And the God of peace shall be with you. 10. 7. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.

Faith's victory over the World and all its temptations.

S E R M O N XIII.

I JOHN 5. 4.

For wharsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

IN these words the Apostle manifestly design'd to prevent an Objection, which he foresaw Men would be very apt to make, against the Position which he had advanc'd, in the foregoing verse, *viz.* that *God's Commandments, are not grievous*. To prove which to be false, they would be very apt to argue, that God's Commandments must necessarily be grievous, since the world would be sure to give them a great deal of trouble, difficulty and opposition, in the keeping of them. Where-

fore, that he might be before-hand with these Objectors, he shews them plainly, in the words of my Text, why this objection could not signify any thing : for, or because, *whatsoever is born of God*, every true Child of God, every one that sincerely desires and endeavours to do his will, *overcometh the world*, hath Power and strength sufficient to break through all this trouble, difficulty and opposition, which he is sure to meet with from the world; and to keep God's commandments, in spite of them

Whatsoever is born of God, that is, every true Christian: not every one that is baptiz'd into the name of Christ, but that is really and effectually born again of the Holy Ghost, so as to become a *partaker of the Divine Nature*. Every one that doeth righteousness, that committeth no sin, that is, that does not live in any habitual course of sin, but, on the contrary, in a constant course of piety and virtue, and that has *his seed remaining in him*, hath the Seed of the *word of truth*, or, which comes much to one, of the Holy Spirit (by both which Men are said, in Scripture, to be regenerate and born again) firmly and continually abiding in him, so as to be a constant and efficacious principle of spiritual Life and Action in him. As St. John himself describes one that is *born of God*, in several places of this very Epistle

Overcometh the world, so far gets the better of all manner of Temptations, which he meets with in the world (whither from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life : from himself or others : from bad men or bad things, from wicked spirits or deprav'd affections : from evil persuasions or evil examples : from blandishments and allurements, or from terrors and Persecutions: and, in one word, from whatsoever is made use of to work either upon our hopes or our fears) that they shall never be able to draw him from his duty, in any instance; or, at least, if they do by great chance happen to surprize him unawares, shall not be able to lead him away captive, and detain him their prisoner long : but shall soon deliver him up again to the prevailling force of prayer and repentance, which, thro' the grace of God, shall securely recover him from the snares of the Devil.

And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Our faith? that is, the faith of a Christian; a firm and hearty belief of all the truths, but more especially of the glorious promises, of the Gospel. Is the victory, is the means or instrument

ment, by which this victory is to be obtain'd. Tho' methinks, something more, than barely this, should be meant, by this strong and emphatical Phrase, this is the victory. And, probably enough, the Apostle designed by it to signify farther, the speedyness and certainty of faith, in obtaining this victory: insomuch that, no sooner should faith appear against the world in the field, but the victory should be present and infallible, and faith and victory should be, as it were, one and the same thing.

The words thus explain'd lead me to discourse upon these following particulars.

First, The obligations that lyes upon all Christians, thus to overcome the world; imply'd in those words, *Whatsoever is born of God*, every true Christian, *overcometh the world*.

Secondly, The power and ability that every good Christian has thus to overcome the world; every such one doth actually overcome it.

Lastly, That faith is the great and sure means, or instrument, by which this victory is to be obtain'd; *This is the victory, that overcometh the world, even our faith*.

First, The obligation that lyes upon all Christians, thus to overcome the World; imply'd in those words, *Whatsoever is born of God*, every true Christian, *overcometh the world*. Now, besides that God hath frequently, and with great earnestness requir'd this of us in Scripture: that one great end of his Son's coming into the World was, to teach and enable us to do this: that, for this purpose, he hath given us both his own example, and the assistance of his Spirit: and that upon the condition of our doing this, he has suspended those exceeding great and precious promises, which he hath brought to light by the Gospel: and moreover, that we our selves have, inexpress terms, and in a most solemn manner, promis'd and vow'd this in our Baptism. Besides all this, I say, it is demonstrable, from the very nature of things that we cannot perform, so much as, any one duty of our Christian Religion, as we ought to do, without having first thus overcome the world. And consequently, our obligations thus to overcome it are as many, as our Christian Duties: and it is as necessary for us to do this, as it is to become good Christians.

For alas! there is one Duty of our Christian Life, in which we shall not be sure to meet with temptations enough, to make the performance of it as difficult to us, as is possible. And consequently

quently, if we have not pretty well made our selves proof against these Temptations ; nay, if we are not fully prepar'd to resist and vanquish them, the conflict will go hard against us, and we shall be sure, not to be beaten off wholly from our Duty, yet at least to perform it in a very lame and unacceptable manner.

And indeed, what can we imagine was God's design, in placing us here in a state of trial and probation, and in the midst of numberless and most powerful enemies and temptations of all kinds : but that we should give full proof of our being his faithful servants, and minister very much to his praise and glory, by manfully wrestling with, and getting the mastery over, all manner of opposition and temptation, for his sake ? It cannot be for his honour, that his servants should be overcome, and submit to any temptations, and therefore this, we may be sure, is what he never could design. But, to fight his Battles, to maintain his cause, to trample under foot his enemies, to triumph under his Banner : this is his Glory, and therefore this must infallibly be our Duty.

Wherefore, not to insist any longer on so plain a case ; let me rather exhort you to that, which seems to be abundantly more needful, to use your utmost care and diligence, in performing this so evidently necessary a Duty ; to arise and be doing, and, since the temptations of the world must be overcome by us, or we our selves must be overcome by them, to pluck up a good courage, and resolve for victory. To consider on the one hand how pitiful, how ignominious, how infinitely fatal, a foil, in this case must prove : on the other hand how honourable, how glorious, how everlastingly beneficial a victory. And, by these and such like considerations, to animate our selves to the battle, in which, if we do but sincerely do our part, we have not the least reason to fear that we shall fail of success and victory. As will more plainly appear from considering.

Secondly, The power and ability that every good Christian has thus to overcome the World ; every such one doth actually overcome it. It might be conviction enough to any good Christian, that he shall be able to *overcome the world*, merely to consider that God has Commanded him to overcome it, as well knowing that a good God cannot command us to do any thing which he has not given us power to do. But, besides this, God

has graciously been pleas'd explicitly to assure us, that this may be done, that, if we do not give place to the Devil, but resist him, resist him stedfast in the faith, Eph. 4. 27. he will flee from us: 1 Pet. 5. 9. that God will bruise Satan under our feet: See Rom. 16. 20. Revel. 12. 10. and that he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we shall be able: but will with the temptation also make away to escape, that we may be able to bear it. 1 Cor. 10. 13.

And indeed, when we seriously reflect, that we are under the all-powerful conduct and assistance of God's holy Spirit: and that we have and exceeding and eternal weight of glory laid in the Balance, against the world and its temptations, it is no wonder that we should become an overmatch for them. For, as St. John argues, in the 4th chap. of this Epistle, at the 4th ver. Greater is he that is in us, the holy Spirit that abides and dwells in all good Christian, than he that is in the world: then the spirit, that worketh, in the children of disobedience. Eph. 2. 2. The Devil, the Prince of this World, how strong soever, yet must here confess his weakness, and shall surely find, that there are stronger than he. And who would not press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ Jesus? What difficulties, what temptations, shall be able to stop him in his course, under what discouragements, what tribulations, can he faint, who runs not for a corruptible crown, but an incorruptible: who has such joys set before him, as eye never saw, ear never heard, and as it never entered into the heart of man to conceive?

Farthermore, it must be consider'd that our blessed Lord did, in his own person, overcome the world, all its best and choicest temptations, all its severest terrors and persecutions, the whole Artillery of which it discharged at once upon him, on purpose, that we might be of good cheer as he himself expresseth it; that, seeing the Prince of this World cast out by him, Job. 16. 33. we might be sensibly convinc'd that this thing, how difficult soever, is not impracticable: and that we might not be afraid to enter the lists, where the Captain of our Salvation had both shew'd and broken, the way before us.

Nay, and not only our blessed Lord, but all his faithful Followers and Disciples, have thus overcome the World, after his example. How perfect had St. Paul crucify'd it to him, and himself to it? How triumphantly did he defy its worth, in those most glorious words, Romans the 8th 35. 37, 38, 39. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress

stress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. And what a Noble Army of Martyrs has the Christian Church, in all Ages, had, that have left father and mother, wives, and children, houses and lands, nay and even their very lives themselves, for the love of Christ and his Gospel? And, blessed be God, there have been never wanting many such Christians in the World, who, tho' they have not been call'd out to resist unto blood, yet have manfully resisted such temptations, as they have been call'd to: have fought a good fight, have overcome the wicked one, and, in spite of numberless and most powerful temptations to the contrary, have kept themselves unspotted from the world.

Wherefore, my Brethren, as the Apostle speaks, Ephes. 6. 10. 11, 12, 13, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And then, tho' we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places: yet still we shall be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand. Above all, if we take the shield of faith, or, as it is in another place, the breast plate of faith, wherewith we shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. 1 Theff. 5. 8, 16. Which brings me to my last head, and which I chiefly design'd to speak to, viz.

Thirdly, That faith is the great and sure means or instrument, by which this victory is to be obtain'd; And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. What the Apostle here means by faith, he himself explains in the verse immediately following my Text: viz. a believing that Jesus is the Son of God, that is in effect, a believing the whole Gospel of Christ. And how much such a Faith, as this, will help towards our obtaining a sure and compleat victory over the world, will appear from the following particulars.

First, It is this Faith, which directs us in the true way of overcoming the World; which informs us aright of the state and condition of our spiritual enemies, their prodigious number,

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ber, strength, diligence and subtilty (things which mere reason was but little acquainted with) and fore-warns us to prepare and arm our selves accordingly, against their assaults. To accustom our selves to self-denyal and mortification, and, by this means, to harden our selves against all manner of temptations. to watch continually, to be always upon our guard, and to use our *utmost diligence, least at any time we fall into the condemnation of the devil.* More especially, it is this Faith, which make us duly sensible of our insufficiency to mainrain this Combar, against the World, upon our own strength (a thing which the wisest of natural Men never thoroughly understood) and therefore puts us upon praying earnestly to God, for his assistance, thro' the strength of which we know we may be *enabled to do all things.* Phil. 4. 13.

Secondly, It is Faith, that proposeth the noblest motives and encouragements to us, to excite our courage and resolution, and animate us to this Combar, against the World and its temptations, with all the zeal and vigour possible. There are but three things necessary, to spur on rational Agents, to any enterprize whatsoever: and they are, a sense of its being their duty, of its being feasible, and of its being vastly for their honour and interest: nay, and even absolutely necessary, to secure them from everlasting ruin and destruction, and obtain for them everlasting happiness and glory. And all these Faith makes use of, to encourage us, in the case before us. Our duty in this point is plainly legible, almost in every page of the Gospel: the feasibility of it abundantly appears, both, from the consideration of the Divine assistance and rewards, which are there again and again promis'd, to encourage and enable us to perform it, and the many illustrious examples of our blessed Lord and his faithful Followers and Disciples, who have all actually performed it: and the infinite danger of our not performing it, the infinite glory and happiness of our performing it, are there set forth to us, in such a lively and pathetical manner, as must certainly very much affect and influence us, if any thing can.

Thirdly, Faith does not only assure us of the Divine assistance and rewards, in and for the performance of this Duty: but it is moreover it self a means of procuring and obtaining them for us. It is to Faith only, a true and lively belief of these things, that the promises of them are made; and, *according to our belief, will it be done unto us.* And what our blessed

bleſſed Saviour ſaid to his Diſciples, of the extraordinary gifts of the holy Spirit, is every with as true of theſe ordinary ones, *believe that ye receive them, and ye ſhall have them.* Mark 11. 24.

Laſtly, Faith will be always preſent with us, in the very inſtant of temptation, and ſuggeſt ſuch thoughts, afford ſuch helps, adminiſter ſuch *inward reſreſhments and conſolations* to us, as ſhall be moſt proper and able to ſupport us, in this time of tryal. For Faith, true Faith, is a very lively and active principle, always awake, and always upon its guard: and conſequently, whenever or wherever it ſhall be attack'd, it will be always ready to make a brave and vigorous defence.

Are we tempted to commit ſin, as *Joſeph* was, by all the moſt prevailing charms of fleſh and ſenſe? Faith will be preſently ſuggeſting to us, as it did to him, *How can you do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Genes. 39. 9. Remember that *the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof, but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever*; 1 Joh. 2. 17. Remember that *whore-mongers and Adulterers God will judge*: Heb. 13. 4. that they ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire and brimſtone; Revel. 21. 8. but he, that glorifyeth God with his body, ſhall receive a glory'd body from him, for ever and ever. Your temptation indeed is ſtrong: but your power to overcome it infinitely ſtronger. The pleaſure, which you are at preſent invited to, may ſeem very great; but alas! the puniſhment, if you embrace it, the reward, if you reſuſe it, will be infinitely greater.

Doth the world attempt, by large offers of worldly goods, riches, honour, power, &c. to bribe and buy us off from our duty, and conſequently from our care of our Souls? How ready will Faith be, to put that queſtion of our Saviour's to us, *What will it profit a man, if he ſhall gain the whole world and looſe his own ſoul, or what ſhall a man give in exchange for his Soul?* Mark 8. 36, 37. How ready to remind us, that it doth not become believers to receive honour one of another, and not ſeek the honour that cometh from God only; John 5. 44. that he, that loveth houſes or lands better than our Saviour, is not worthy of him, is a denyer of him, Mat. 10. 33, and ſhall be deny'd by him, before his Father and his holy Angels, at the Day of Judgment? Mark 8. 38. How ſure to preach the Apoſtles Doctrine to us, that *the love of money, the unmoderate love of it, is the root of all evil*: Luke 14. 26.

that *they that will be rich*, that resolve right or wrong to be so, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition : err from the faith, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows, 1 Tim. 6. 9, 10. but on the contrary, that those who honour God, he will honour, 1 Sam. 2. 30. and that too with such honours, as this world has not to give : that godliness with contentment is great gain : 1 Tim. 6. 6. that a small thing that the righteous hath, is better than great riches of the ungodly : Ps 37. 16. that happy, beyond all expression happy, is that Man, who is rich towards God, who hath treasure in Heaven, tho' little upon Earth : who enjoys the continual feast of a good Conscience, and has that true greatness of mind, which his blessed Lord had to despise the Kingdoms of the Earth and the glory of them, when offer'd upon so base and scandalous a condition, as that of falling down and worshipping the Devil : Mat. 23. 8, 9, 10. or, which is the same thing in other words, wilfully doing any thing, that in our Consciences we believe not to be right, for the sake of them.

And so, on the other side, are we under great tribulations or afflictions of any kind, and by these tempted to repine and murmur against God ? hear what comfortable and encouraging words Faith will speak to us. *Whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth, and scourgeth every son, whom he receiveth.* Heb. 12. 6. 10. *He chasteneth us for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. He comforts us in all our tribulations, and so orders it that, as the sufferings of Christ abide in us, so our consolation abideth by Christ.* 2 Cor. 1. 4, 5. *He will never leave us, nor forsake us.* Heb 13. 5. *Wherefore let us be faithful unto death : and then too he will give us a crown of life.* Rom. 8. 18. And we know, that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compar'd, with the glory that shall be reveal'd in us. 2 Cor., 4. 17. For these are but light afflictions, and that to only for a moment, that an exceeding, nay and an eternal, weight of glory.

Above all ; do we suffer for righteousness sake ? That is not only for professing the faith of Christ, but for acting according to his Laws ; for daring to lead virtuous and religious lives, against the fashion : for daring to be honest, and to hold fast our integrity, 1 Pet. 3. 14. in the most difficult and trying times : for studying to please God rather than Man : and for doing our duties, in our respective stations, with all prudent

prudent courage and resolution. Do we suffer upon these accounts. I say? Oh how certainly, how infallibly, will faith assure us, that we are then happy; that *the spirit of glory and of peace resteth upon us*; 1 Pet. 4. 14. that we ought to *glory and rejoyce in this tribulation*, Rom. 5. 3. to give all possible praise to God, who has accounted us *worthy to suffer thus in his name*, 2 Cor. 7. 4. and to *take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, on this behalf*, Heb. 10. 34. knowing that *in Heaven we have a better and more enduring subsistence*.

This is the charming Rhethorick, this the all conquering power, of a true and lively faith: thus vastly doth she outbid the most winning Allurements and Enticements to sin, which this world can offer: thus easily doth she repel and overcome the most formidable strength, which this world and all its powers can bring against us.

And is not this *weapon then of our warfare mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strong holds*? Will not this *cast down every imagination that exalteth it self, and bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*? 2 Cor. 10. 4. 5. Can we possibly fail of victory, with God on our side, and Heaven for our reward? Can we believe our Duty, our Honour, our everlasting Interest to be at stake, and yet *faint in the day of battel*? Oh! no; even in this sense, *all things are possible to him that believeth*.

And Oh! the glorious attempts, the illustrious successes, the triumphant victories, that have ever attended a true and lively faith! Oh the Heroick actions, that have been done! Oh the more Heroick sufferings, that have been endur'd, upon this principle! How readily did *Abraham, at God's command, Heb. 11. leave his Country, his kindred and his fathers house, for a strange land, whilst he look'd for a city, that bath foundations, whose builder and maker is God*? How cheerfully did he, when he was try'd, offer up his only begotten Son Isaac, and him too the Son of the promise: accounting that *God was able to raise him up even from the dead*? How easily did *Moses refuse to be call'd the Son of Pharaoh's Daughter*: how did he make it his choice, rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season: how heartily did he esteem the reproaches of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the King: while he had respect unto the recompence of reward, and endur'd, as seeing him that is invisible? And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of those, who
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through faith, subdu'd kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtain'd promises, stop'd the mouths of Lyons, quench'd the violence of Fire, escap'd the edge of the Sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valliant in fight, turn'd to flight the armies of Aliens, were tortur'd, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better Resurrection. And others had tryal of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were ston'd, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandred about in sheep-skins and goats-skin, being destitute, afflicted, tormented. They fear'd no dangers, they shunn'd no difficulties, which God was pleas'd to lay in their way: but couragiously, gloriously, triumphantly, encounter'd and broke through all, while they look'd not at the things, which are seen, and are temporal: but unto the things, which are not seen, and are eternal. 2 Cor. 4. 18.

And oh! were our faith like theirs, our successes would surely be like theirs too; But here alas! our cause fails us, our faith is weak, and then by consequence, our defence of our selves, against the temptations of the world, must be weak too. But are there no ways to strengthen a weak Faith? Yes, blessed be God, very many: some of the principal of which I shall just mention, and so conclude. As

First, Often to consider, what good and sure grounds we have, for the belief of the Gospel; which proves it self to be from God, not only from its own intrinsick worth and excellency, and its near resemblance and exact agreeableness to our purest notions of the divine nature: nor yet from its supernatural success and influence over the world, without any visible power, conquering all those mighty powers of the World that oppos'd it, and insinuating it self into the esteem and affections of Mankind, even against all the violent prejudices and prepossessions of education, custom, worldly Interest, &c. nor lastly, by the Testimony which the best and wisest Men of all Ages have given to it, by forsaking all that was dear to them, nay, even sacrificing their very lives, for the sake of it; but also, by direct Testimonies of all kinds, from God himself: by the concurrent predictions of his Prophets, by Angels sent for this purpose, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, by his own voice from Heaven, and by signs and wonder, and divers miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, which our blessed Lord and his Disciples wrought in the face of all the world: and all which, we have an History of firm and undoubted

doubted credit, of infinitely greater credit than any of those, which we most readily embrace for true, to bear witness to.

Secondly, Frequently to reflect upon the power of Faith, in this very instance overcoming Temptations; to read over the Catalogue of those many Worthies, mention'd in the 11th Chapter to the *Hebrews*, which I just now quoted, and consider the mighty Achievements of their Faith; to peruse the Lives, Deaths and Martyrdoms, of the Apostles and first Christians, and behold how they, through Faith, made all manner of Temptations flee before them: and, above all, to look unto *Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endur'd such contradiction of sinners, nay despis'd the shame, and endur'd the ignominious and painful death of the Cross it self.* And surely this, if any thing, will convince us what a divine thing faith is, with what a more than human, energy it works, and how vastly it surpasseth the power of all those Principles, which pure simple reason and philosophy were ever able to furnish men with. This surely will perfectly transport us, make our hearts glow within us, and inspire us with a true Christian emulation of trying to come up to the examples of these Illustrious Champions of Faith, who have so successfully made good their conflict against the world, in their day.

Thirdly, Let us make Tryal of the power of Faith upon ourselves, by giving ourselves up strictly to a life of Faith. Without doubt, the true reason why Men have so little faith is, because, thro' their own fault, they have never, or but very little experienc'd the vital power and influence of it, upon themselves: And how can a Man possibly become duly sensible of the power of that principle, which he has never duly try'd? We see, in fact that when, by some extraordinary Accident some grievous Affliction, a great fit of sickness, near danger of Dying, &c. our Faith is well awaken'd and rous'd within us, then it is able to do wonders: then it helps us with ease to perform those duties, and to vanquish those temptations which we before thought exceeding difficult, if at all to be surmounted. And, as long as our Faith continues thus vigorous and lively, so long our easiness of overcoming Temptations continues too. So that if we would but exercise and accustom our selves to stir up, and keep alive, this principle of Faith within us, this would be both a natural means to show us every day more and more its usefulness and power, and con-

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requently to recommend it every day more and more to our judgment and affections : and also a sure means of grace to obtain, from God, a supernatural encrease of it. He who doth his best to live according to his present measure of Faith, be it what it will, shall undoubtably receive strength and power from God, to proceed from faith to faith, from one degree of it to another. He, who sincerely conducts his whole course of life, upon this principle, who aims at nothing so much, as the pleasing God, upon the motives and encouragements of the Gospel, will soon find his strength to resist temptations grow upon him : and every little victory over them will be to such an one, a pledge and infallible assurance of a much greater presently to come. Faith, like all other habits, improves best by use and exercise ; Faith, like all other Christian graces, will be rewarded with an encrease, in proportion to the advantage which we make of that stock, which we already have of it.

Lastly, Let us earnestly beg of God to encrease our Faith, and constantly and diligently make use of those Ordinances, which he hath appointed, as the ordinary means for obtaining an encrease of it. For *Faith*, as *St. Paul* tells us, is the gift of God, Ephes. 2. 8. and therefore is no more to be obtain'd without Prayer, than any other of his good gifts are. And accordingly we find, that our Lord's Apostles took themselves to this way, of procuring an encrease of their Faith ; *Lord, say they, encrease our Faith.* Luk. 17. 5.

But, besides Prayer, there are other means also instituted by God, or those commission'd by him, for this purpose : upon which if we are not careful duly to attend, we must e'en blame our selves, if we do not find our faith improve as fast, as we would have it. Such are hearing the word, frequenting the publick worship, partaking of the holy Sacrament, and observing those sacred seasons, which the Church has set apart for this very end, to encrease our faith, and make a proof against temptation, in such a religious manner as the Church has prescrib'd to us ; by mortifying our bodies with such degrees of fasting, as we find will best serve the ends of religion : by allotting more of our time than ordinary, to the exercises of Devotion. reading the Scriptures, and Divine meditation : and by contemplating largely on the examples of those glorious Saints and Servants of God, who have, thro'

many tribulations, enter'd into the Kingdom of Heaven: and more especially that of the Son of God, who *was tempted in all points like as we are*, tho' in a vastly higher degree, but yet *was without sin*, easily overcame all manner of Temptations: as may be seen, almost in every part of his life, but chiefly in that great and holy Week, the Week of his Passion, now approaching.

Oh glorious Week! in which the whole Powers, of Earth and Hell combin'd together, were totally routed, overcome, and utterly defeated, by the Son of God appearing in humane Nature: in which, the *man Christ Jesus spoil'd principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them*: in which death lost its sting, sin its dominion, and the head of the old serpent was so terribly bruise'd, by the seed of the woman, that he shall never more recover his former strength. Dearest Jesu! is it possible for us seriously to consider thy complete victory over the world, the flesh and the devil, and yet to continue afraid of them? Is it possible to consider how triumphantly thou, the *Captain of our Salvation, fought'st a good fight, finish'st thy course: and led'st even captivity it self captive*, and yet to grow weary and faint in our minds? Is it possible to behold the very prints of those steps, by which thou hast mark'd out the way for us to victory: and not immediately to tread in them, and securely confide that, in so doing, we shall become more than Conquerors?

These, these, my dear Christian Brethren, are sure ways to strengthen a weak faith: to build us up, to stablish us, to make us steadfast and immovable in that true Christian Faith, which overcometh the world.

And oh blessed day! when we shall have once thoroughly possess'd our Souls, with such a vigorous and effective Faith as this, full of the hopes of Victory and Immortality. How little, good God! how little, will the biggest temptation of this World look, in the eye of such a Faith? How soon will all our mountains of difficulties be remov'd; how easy will it be to keep all God's commandments; how plain will the way be, to truth, to honesty, to peace, to private, to publick happiness; when the God of this world shall be once stripp'd, by faith, of all his power over us? When he shall no longer hinder us, from seeing *the things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another*? But the Gospel of peace shall be

be our only guide, and the peace, which that promiseth, our only, at least, our chief aim?

As therefore we love our selves, or others, our present or future happiness: as we have any regard for truth, or right, or peace, or charity: as we value our own, much more God's and our blessed Saviour's, honour: in one word, as we have any sense of what is rational, and becoming and our positive Duty as we love our own true Interest, as we desire our own everlasting welfare: as we are men, much more as we are Christians; let us be conjur'd to *walk by faith, and not by sight*, to live above this World, the customs, the fashions, the temptations of it, and, whatever it may cost us, to crucify and subdue it to our selves, entirely to keep under and overcome it. Always bearing in mind those glorious promises, which our blessed Lord himself hath made to him that obtains this Victory;

He that overcometh shall be cloth'd in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his Angels. I will make him a pillar in the Temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is the new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven, from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. And oh glorious words that follow! what shall we not be most willing to do, or to suffer for the sake of them? And I will grant to him, to sit with me in my Throne: even as I also overcame, and am sit down with my Father, in his Throne.

The danger of talking much, and wisdom of the contrary.

S E R M O N XIV.

PROVERBS 10. 19.

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin : but he that refraineth his lips, is wise.

THere is hardly any one instance, in the whole conduct of humane Life, in which Men are more apt to offend, and yet seem to be less sensible of their offending, than in the management of their Tongues. For tho', as St. James tells us, *the Tongue is such an unruly evil, as no man can perfectly tame, tho' it is full of deadly poison, setteth on fire the whole course of nature, and defileth the whole body, c. 3. v. 6. 8. tho' honour and shame, death Eccl. 5. 13. and life are in the power of it: Prov. 18, 21. yet is there nothing more common, than to see Men extremely negligent and careless, rash, hasty and inconsiderate, in their use of it. So far are they from observing that most excellent precept of being slow to speak, Jam. 1. 19. that they are generally a great deal too lavish and prodigal of their Tongues: and, when once they are engag'd in talk, and ever so little heated with it, they very often let fly at random, and foolishly blurt out every thing, that comes uppermost; how much soever it may tend, to the dishonour of God, the prejudice of their neighbour or the eternal ruin of their own precious and immortal Souls.*

The Wise Man, being well aware of this, takes occasion frequently, in this Book of *Proverbs*, to caution us against much talking: by representing to us, on the one hand, the great danger which we shall bring our selves into, by it: and, on the other hand, the great wisdom and advantage, of abstaining from it. Thus, in the 29. ch. 20. *Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? there is more hope of a fool than of him; and again, ch. 17. 27. He that hath knowledge spareth his words; and to name no more,*

the words of my Text, *In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin*, or, as the *Septuagint* version has it, *in talking much thou shalt not avoid sin*: If you allow your self an unbounded liberty of perpetual talking, you will certainly say many such things, as are inexpedient and unlawful for you to say, or, as it is yet higher in the Original, *in the multitude of words sin shall not cease*: It shall not cease indeed, but rather it shall not abound, and in much talking there shall be a continual danger of much sinning. But *he that refraineth his lips is wise*; He who keeps his Tongue within due bounds, considers before he speaks, and speaks, not much, but seasonably, and to the purpose: this Man acts, in this respect, as becomes, not only a prudent, but also a truly good and religious Man.

By words here we are not to understand all words in general, but only those of our common Conversation: for, in many cases, there is no danger at all of sinning in using many words, as in the case of all set and premeditated Discourses: nay, in some cases, it is a necessary duty to speak much; speaking being the very buisness and profession of a great part of mankind. And therefore this Apophthegm of the wise Man's must not be taken universally, but in a restrain'd and limited sense, as relating on-ly to those Men, who are perpetually chattering in company who say many needless words, and may, in *Solomon's* Language, more properly be call'd prating fools, than Men of argument and business. *Prov 10. 10.*

From the words thus explain'd, I shall take occasion to represent to you,

First, The great difficulty, or rather impossibility, of talking much and talking *Innocently*, *in the multitude of words sin shall not* be.

Secondly, The great wisdom of refraining our lips, of considering before we speak, and avoiding all rash and unadvis'd words; *He that refraineth his lips is wise.*

First, The great difficulty, or rather impossibility, of talking much and talking innocently. There are so many several ways of offending with our Tongues, both against God and against Man: by profane and atheistical, lewd and irreligious, and scoffing Discourses: by reproach and scandal, by slander and detraction, by false defamations uncharitable truths, by lying and equivocation, by court and flattery, by bragging and boasting, by murmuring and complaining, by arrogancy and positiveness, &c. and the Tongue is in its own nature such

an unruly member, so very apt to run into all this variety of sin, that those who have been most careful in bridling it in, yet have found it an impracticable task to keep it always within due bounds. And therefore St. James had great reason to call him, *who offends not in word, a perfect man* : Jam. 3. 2. and the Son of Sirach to pronounce him *blessed, who hath not slipp'd with his mouth, and is not prick'd with the multitude of his sins* ; Eccl. 14. 1. where, to my present purpose, he seems to make a *multitude of sins* the natural consequence of *slipping with the mouth*. And indeed this is such a perfection, such a blessings no Man ever yet arriv'd at, the blessed Jesus only excepted, *in whose mouth there was no guile*. 1 Pet. 2. 22. All other the most eminent patterns of Piety and Vertue, recorded in Scripture, have had their slips and failings in this point, and, notwithstanding all their utmost care and vigilance, have been betray'd into sin by their Tongues. Moses, who was the meekest of Men, and therefore we may be sure not given to rash talking, yet spake sometimes *unadvisedly with his lips* ; Ps. 106. 33. and David that Man after God's own heart, who seems generally to have been very jealous and wratchful over this Treacherous member his Tongue, yet in Uriah's case suffer'd it to play Hypocrite, spake words indeed unto him which were *smoother than cyll*. 2 Sam. 11. 22, 13. but he soon found them, without a figure to be very swords. Ps. 55. 21. Nay, even those two great Apostles our Saviour, St. Peter and St. Paul must plead guilt in this case : since the one deny'd his Master, and the other, by his own confession, contrary to the Law of God, *revil'd the High-Priest*. Act. 23. 5.

Since this is so, since even these Holy Men, who took great heed to their ways, that they might not offend with their Tongues, Ps. 39. 1. were nevertheless sometimes overtaken in a fault, and unawares drawn into the Devil's snare ; what can be expected from those Men, who take no heed to their ways at all, but talk, as without measure, so without care ? Since those who us'd the greatest caution, and set the strictest guard upon the door of their lips, were nevertheless sometime surpriz'd to a transgression of their Duty ; what can be expected from those Men, who are so far from keeping any guards upon their Tongues, that they entirely let loose the reins to them, and suffer them to ramble, whithersoever they please ? What deed can be expected from them, but that their whole life should be one continu'd transgression, and that the un-

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Member, being once unbridled, should furiously hurry them into all sorts of extravagance, surpass all Bounds, and trample upon all Laws?

And yet this alas! must necessarily be the case of every Man, who accustoms himself to talk much. Consideration, which is the only check upon the Tongue, and alone is able to keep it to its good behaviour: because it is this alone which informs it of its Duty, and at once represents to it and warns it against the many dangerous ways of transgressing it. Consideration, I say, must necessarily be thrown off by such a Man, because he talks abundantly faster than he can possibly think, I mean, than he can think to purpose, than he can judge and deliberate, what is lawful and expedient for him to say. For in such a case as this, where there are so many Rules to be observ'd, and so many By-paths to be avoided, judgment and deliberation can proceed but slowly, and may more properly be said to creep than fly: and if so, he who is hasty, *Prov. 29. 20.* or as the *Septuagint* and *vulgar Latin* translate it *swift, in his words*, will certainly go too fast for his judgment, and leave the consideration behind him; and, if all Consideration, all Law, and all Restraint, nay, and I may safely add, all Religion also; since Religion it self cannot have no security any where but there, where its Laws are constantly and duly remembered and consider'd.

Theophrastus, in his *Moral Character*, cap. 3. has aptly enough describ'd this sort of Men to be *Babblers of long and unpremeditated Discourses*: this is indeed their true and proper Character: they think little but talk much, and are in continual danger of transgressing many Rules, but have regard to none at all. Nor can they take it ill that I fix this Character upon them, since it is exactly agreeable to that, which upon all occasions they give themselves. For, if at any time you tax them with having said what they ought not, they immediately endeavour to excuse themselves, by telling you, that they had *no manner of meaning or design in what they said*: that they had not the least thought of good or harm in it, that it slip'd all from them by chance and unawares, was the effect of carelessness, and entirely owing to inadvertency. And indeed I must do them that right, as to own that their excuse is true, tho' it is not valid, and that their Discourses are generally all inadvertency from the very beginning to the end of them. And, since they are so, I think we need no longer wonder, that we so often hear them blaspheming God and reproaching Men we need no longer

longer wonder that, as the *Psalmist* elegantly expresseth it *their tongue walketh through the earth*; or that *their mouths are sometimes set against the heavens also*. Ps. 73. 9.

But why do I endeavour to convince you of a truth, which is own'd by every one of you in your practise, if not in your discourse? For what else do ye in effect say, when ye refuse to trust these perpetual talkers with your secrets, as all wise Men do, but that ye very well know them to be a sort of Men, who never regard one word they say, who talk all at random, and at a venture, and will be very apt, in the heat and in temperance of their Discourse, notwithstanding all the Sacred Laws of friendship, nay and perhaps the most solemn promises to the contrary too, to divulge the most hidden and important secrets; insomuch that it is now almost become a proverb, that such People are to be trusted with nothing, but what all the world may know. And then surely, if there be so much danger of their forgetting all the Laws and obligations of friendship, there can be no little danger of their forgetting all the Laws and Obligations of Religion also; since the same incogitancy in talking, which makes them subject to forgetfulness in the one case, will make them equally subject to it in the other also.

And Lord! what a prodigious heap of sins must that poor wretch needs amass together, who is perpetually thus talking without thought and without rule? How mightily will iniquity there abound, where Men tamely give themselves up to the wild and extravagant conduct of the tongue, which is itself a *whole world of iniquity*? Jam. 3. 6. Will not the sins of such Men be almost as numberless as their words, and the transgressions of their duty as various as the ways of transgressing it? Oh! whither will their ungovern'd Tongues hurry them but to that Hell, by which they were at first set on fire, and which they shall at last burn, without so much as the least drop of water to cool them, to all eternity?

Consider this, all ye that are full of talk, as *Job* expresseth it and be afraid; thing seriously with your selves, as the wise Man tell us, that *a fools mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul*; Prov. 18. 7. that *the lips of a fool will swallow himself*, Eccles. 10. 12. and *he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction*; Prov. 13. 3. 4. 44. wherefore put away from you the forward mouth, and perverse lips put far from you. Learn, by sparing your tongues, to spare your soul, and by forbearing to be

up words, to forbear also to heap up *wrath against the day for Wrath.* Which that I may the more effectually perswade you to do, I shall proceed now, in the

Second place, to represent to you the great wisdom of refraining your lips, of considering before you speak, and avoiding all rash and unadvis'd talk. And this, I hope, will abundantly appear, from the consideration of these following particulars.

First, That this is a sure way to gain us a reputation, and make us pass for wise Men in the World. Men are very apt to judge of our discretion by our words, and to measure our understandings, not by the length, but, by the seasonableness and solidness, of our Discourses. If we carelessly let fly at every thing, which presents it self to us, whether we understand it or no, as all great talkers do, we shall soon betray our own ignorance; and the breath, which we spend in talking, will only serve to blow away our credit, and procure us the ignominious name of prating fools. But if we are careful to refrain our lips from speaking of those things, which we do not understand, and from saying no more of those we do than what is seasonable, and has been before-hand well weighed and consider'd by us we shall in all probability be esteem'd as Oracles of wisdom, and, because we discover no ignorance, shall be thought to have none. *Even a fool, as Solomon tells us, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise, and he that shutteth his lips is esteem'd a man of understanding;* Prov. 17. 28. that is, a Man of very ordinary Parts and Abilities, who can so far govern his Tongue, as to keep it from telling tales of his own Ignorance and Folly, may pass well enough, in the World, for a Man of competent wit and understanding. And I may safely take up the reverse of the wise Man's observation, and say, *Even a man of parts, when he is talking hastily, is counted a fool, and he who opens his mouth so wide, as to let every word that first comes, fly out of it is deservedly esteem'd a Man of no understanding.*

If then we have any love for Reputation. that great and just darling of Mankind, let us shew it, by taking care of our Tongues, which, if not kept within due bounds, will as certainly blast our own Credit, as our Neighbours. Let us remember, as *Plutarch* well adviseth, [*De garrulitate.*] *how much more admir'd, how far they are reputed to excel in prudence, who deliver their minds in few words, roundly, home and sententious* and,

and contract a great deal of sense within a small compass of speech, than scub as fly out into voluminous language, and suffer their Tongues to run before their Wits. And, remembring this, let us endeavour to speak cautiously and slowly, and then we shall be sure to speak wisely. Then shall our wisdom be known by our speech, and our learning by the words of our mouths, as it is express'd Ecclus. 4. 24.

Secondly, This will be a sure means of avoiding many occasions of giving offence to our neighbours, and drawing down mischiefs thereby upon our own heads.

Every Man, who is given to talk much and rashly, must necessarily be subject to many, more especially these three, very great inconveniences.

First, The perpetual noise and clamour of his Tongue will be offensive to all company, and render him unacceptable and burdensome, wheresoever he comes. Men do not care to have talk impos'd upon them, whither they will or no, especially the talk of such shallow brain'd and emty Creatures, as these vain babblers generally are. And hence it comes to pass, as *Plutarch* observes, that they can never meet with any that are willing, either to eat, or drink, or lodge with them, in the same Room; but as far as they can, all Men decline and avoid their company, and those who cannot grow soon sick and weary of it.

Secondly, His hastiness in talking will very often be an occasion, of his overlooking all the Laws of good breeding, and offending against the nicest punctilioes of honour: of his dropping rude and unmannerly expressions, and either saying such things as he should not, or at least not saying them as he should. And how dismal the effects of such unwary expressions may prove, it is no hard matter to fore-see. How apt they are to stir our passions and exasperate our rage we all feel: how many unhappy quarrels they have been the occasion of we all know: and in what a Tragical Scene of blood and murder they are but too likely to end. our own sad experience may convince us, which has often'd shew'd us, that the flames of Men's wrath thus enkindled, would be extinguish'd no other way, than by the blood of him, who first enkindled them. So true is the wise Man's observation, that *a fools lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes*; Prov. 18. 6. and that *a prating fool shall fall*, or, as it may be translated, *shall be beaten*. Prov. 10. 10.

Nay it is well, if the petulancy of such a Man's tongue do not, by some imprudence or other, affront and provoke even publick Authority it self, and, by so doing, pull down vengeance upon him, in a no less terrible, but much more justifiable way, than the former.

Lastly, His incurable itch of talking will necessitate him, even for the support of his Trade, to turn Tale bearer : to pick up or make stories of his neighbours, nay and, as it is but too commonly seen, of his Betters and his Governours, which he may carry from one to another, whither true or false he matters not, provided they be but long enough to fill up the empty spaces of his discourse, and to entertain his company with, when he is put to't for something else to say. And how directly contrary such an employment as this is to God's express commands, how odious and contemptible it will render any Man, how much real injury it will do to others, and how much sure mischief it will bring upon his own head, a small acquaintance with Scripture will easily inform us. *Thou shalt not go up and down*, saith God, *as a tale-bearer among thy people* ; Levit. 19. 16 much less shalt thou revile the Gods, or Judges, or curse the ruler of thy people. Exod. 23. 28. *The words of a tale-bearer are as wounds* said Solomon, *and they go down into the innermost part of the belly* ; Prov. 18. 8. 16. 28. they sow strife, and very often separate chief friends. And the back biting tongue hath pull'd down strong cities and overthrow'n the house of great men, saith the Son of Sirack. Ecclus. 28. 14. And it so surely the Tale-bearer himself, who gives these deadly wounds, the back-bitter who doth these mighty mischiefs, must needs be abhor'd and detested, both by God and Men, as the very bane of Friendship and plague of Society. And accordingly we find how dismally the poor Prophet Jeremiah bemoans himself, upon account of his having to do with a People, that were addicted to these sins, and what terrible judgments he denounceth upon them, from God, for the sake of them. *Oh that I had in the Wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men*, saith he, *that I might leave my people and go from them* ; for they be all an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongue, like their bow for lyes, but they are not valliant for the truth upon the earth. Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother, for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak truth ; they have taught their tongues to speak lyes, and weary themselves

selves to commit iniquity. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold I will melt them and try them; shall not I visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be aveng'd on such a nation as this? Jerem. 9. 2. 3. 4. &c.

For these and such like reason doubtless it is, that we are so often told, in Scripture, *that a man full of words shall not prosper upon the earth; Ps. 140. 11. that a fools voice is known by multitude of words. 12. 13.* And to the same purpose, by the Son of Sirach, *he that is rash in his talk shall be hated, and a man who useth many words shall be abhor'd. Ecclus. 9. 18.*

But now the Man, who is careful to refrain his Lips, will be sure to abstain from giving any offence of this nature: His great cautiousness in speaking will keep him from provoking any Man, much more is Governours, by any rash and indecent Expressions; and the little pleasure which he takes in talking, merely for talking's sake, will be a sufficient security, both against his worrying Company with his Tongue, and his carrying about false and impertinent stories. He can hold his Tongue without pain, and therefore will not stir it at the expense of his Justice and Charity, of his own Peace and his brother's Reputation; he can manage it with prudence, and, if so, without offence. And then surely this Man may reasonably hope to live in peace and quiet, since, as the Son of Sirach tells us, *He that can rule his tongue shall live without strife, and he that hateth babbling shall have less evil. Ecclus. 19. 6,* nay, and not only so, but to be the delight of all good Company, and the joy of his Neighbourhood, and, according to the Psalmist's rule, *to live long, and see good days, because he can keep his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile.*

Thirdly, He who talks thus carefully will, in all probability, talk so, as to have no reason to be concern'd or troubl'd afterwards, for what he has said; I do not mean on a Religious, but Civil account. There is nothing in the World more common than for Men, who are guilty of rash talking, to say such things in the heat and intemperance of their discourse, as, in coolness and sedateness of temper, they heartily wish unsaid. How often may we hear them upbraiding themselves of folly, upon this score? How often cursing those Tongues, which have brought so much shame, and confusion of face upon them; Oh! what would they give, that they had not, by the rashness of their Tongues, disoblig'd this and t'other Friend or Benefactor: that they had not divulged such and such a secret:

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that they had not unawares discover'd their minds so freely, in this or that point: or that they had not betray'd their own ignorance so plentifully, as they did, by talking so very much of things, which they did so very little understand, &c. Thus do they frequently lash themselves, with the remembrance of their own folly, and reap that sorrow and remorse, which are the natural fruit of all rashness.

But we hear nothing of all this from the cautious talker: he had an eye to his own peace, in all his discourses, and therefore took care continually, *so to order his words, with discretion*, Ps. 112. 5. that they might not be the seeds of a future repentance. He can reflect upon them with pleasure, because he spoke them with prudence, and rejoyce in having said them, because he sees no reason to wish them unsaid.

Fourthly, He, who is thus careful to refrain his Lips, takes a very likely course to avoid all sins of the Tongue whatsoever. For as multiplying words is a sure way to multiply sins, and talking rashly to talk wickedly; so to be sparing of our words, and to speak with caution and deliberation, is our only sure way not to offend, or at least to offend but seldom with our Tongue. *David* knew no other way to keep his tongue from offending, but by keeping his mouth, as it were with a bridle; Ps. 39. 2. and the *Son of Sirach* was so sensible, that this was the only way to preserve him from sinning with his mouth that he passionately cryeth out: *Who shall set watch before my mouth, and a seal of wisdom upon my lips that I not suddenly by them, and that my Tongue destroy me not?* Eccl. 22. 27.

I am willing to believe that Men do not formally design to transgress their duty, and affront God, in every sin of their Tongues; nay, I hope that many, I would be glad to say most of them, are chiefly owing to heedlessness, and an habit of talking without thinking. To what else can we impute those light and trifling Conversations, those silly, yet often not harmless, reflections upon things which are quite out of our Province, and which we understand nothing of, those improbable lyes and ridiculous Stories of our Neighbours, those senseless Oaths and unprofitable Execrations, which do so much abound among us? Nay, and is it not but too too often seen, that this very heedlessness and incogitancy dare to thrust themselves along with us, even into the house of God, and let loose our Tongues, impertinently to run and prattle there, where sure, if any where, we ought to be *all attention and all reverence, all humble thoughtfulness, and all devotion?*

So that many of sins of the Tongue, it is plain, are owing to the want of, and might easily be prevented by a very moderate degree of precaution and consideration. And, as for those more wilful and malicious ones, such prophane jestings upon Scripture, and sacred things, spreading of false reports, on purpose to do mischief, either to the publick or private Persons, and in general, all lewd and immoral Discourses, design'd to fly in the face of virtue and religion: these all appear, at first sight, to be so very unfair and unjust, base and dishonourable, contrary to all the laws of good nature and good breeding, of God and Man, and so high-

ly injurious and offensive to both, so little likely to bring any reputation or profit to those that use them, in this world, and so sure to cut them off from all hopes of happiness, in another ; that one would think it impossible, that any Man of tolerable sense and breeding, that allows himself time to think before he speaks, could possibly accustom himself to be guilty of these sins.

Hear therefore, O ye Children, the discipline of the mouth ; he that keepeth it, shall never be taken in his lips. Eccles. 23. 7. But above all, keep thy mouth with all keeping, when thou goest into the house of God : and let not that Tongue which was given thee chiefly for this end, that thou mightst honour God with it, in praying and giving praise to him, be made an instrument of dishonouring him, and that too, in his own house the house of Prayer.

Fifthly and Lastly, To talk thus cautiously is a sure way, to make our account short and easy, against the day of Judgment. There is a day most certainly a coming (how soon, God alone knows) when we shall be call'd upon to give an account of every idle Word, that we have spoken, that is, tho' not of every unnecessary one, yet, I fear, of every rash and mischievous one ; and when by our words, as our Saviour himself has assur'd us, we must either stand or fall, be justify'd or condemn'd, eternally justify'd or eternally condemn'd. *Mat. 12. 36, 37.*

And Lord ! what a dreadful account must that poor wretch then needs give in, who has been all his life long talking, as if there had been no laws for the Tongue at all ? How numberless will the idle words of such a Man be, how severe a sentence will they bring upon him ? Good God ! with what amazement, horror and confusion, will he then look back upon his past life, when he shall find too plainly that damnation and idle Words must go together, and that, all the while he thought himself playing with his Tongue, he was really talking himself into everlasting Torments ?

But, on the contrary, with what calmness and serenity of mind, on this account, wil that Man appear before the great Tribunal, whose Conscience will give him this Testimony, that the words of his life have been few and discreet, inoffensive to God, unhurtful to Man, and consequently such, as he shall be justify'd by, before the righteous Judge of all things.

If then, to behave our selves so, as to establish our reputation, so as to gain the love and friendship of our Brethren, and secure the peace of our own minds, in this life : if so, as to avoid sin, and to prepare for judgment in the next, may be accounted wisdom ; then he, who is thus careful to refrain his lips, may be justly esteem'd one of the wisest of Men.

And now, the only use which I shall make of all that has been said, shall be to perswade Men not to multiply words without knowledge, but to think a great deal more, and talk a great deal less, than they generally do ; and to beg of them that, as they would not allow in themselves, so neither would they encourage in others, this vain talkative humour, which,

has been largely shew'd, is attended with such a long train of evil Consequences. I know very well that it is the custom of too many, to judge of Mens parts by their backwardness or forwardness in talking: to call those, who are pert and bold in speech, witty and ingenious, and, on the contrary, those who are slow and modest in it, dull and foolish. But surely these Men must have very sorry parts themselves, who can call a Man a fool, for being afraid of talking away his reputation, his ease, the peace of his mind, and his hope of everlasting happiness: or a Wit, for venturing to throw away all these together, a great deal faster than other people.

But I would not willingly be misunderstood. My design is not to tie Men up wholly from talking, but only to teach them to talk wisely: not to spoil Conversation, but to make it innocent and improving. I am so far from thinking Men oblig'd to speak nothing but Apophthegms and wise Sentences in company, and never to drop one word, but what is absolutely necessary, that I readily grant, that Religion allows and approves, in its proper season, all such diverting and facetious Discourse, as hurts no Body, neither God, our Neighbours, nor our own Souls. All my desire is that yours may be such, and that, in order to its being so, you would be careful not to talk so much and rashly, as to make it impossible for you to talk innocently.

Much less is it my design to make Men so over-cautious of speaking, as that they should be afraid of speaking, even there, where it is seasonable and becoming them, nay and their indispensable duty, to speak. It is not my business to teach Men how to talk cunningly and slyly, and with entire regard only to their worldly Interests (that is a Lesson not proper to be taught in God's house, but the Devils) but to persuade them, if I may be so happy, to speak always both honestly and wisely. He, who is not free to speak his mind (whatsoever dangers may threaten him, for so doing) when his duty requires it of him, is so far from being a good Christian, or a good a Man, that he doth not deserve so much, as the very name of a Man. But then, even where Men are most oblig'd to speak, they are oblig'd also duly to weigh and consider before hand, both the matter and manner of what they speak. And they may depend upon it, that prudence, truly so call'd, as it never has, so it never can, hurt any good cause: but rashness, on the contrary, even when accompany'd with honest intentions, and cover'd over with the specious

ous name of zeal, has spoil'd many an one. Nay perhaps there are no cases, in which we are oblig'd to be more heedful of what we say, than those in which we are most indispensably oblig'd to speak; for these are very often cases, in which those, to whom we speak, are not much dispos'd to hearken to what we say, and therefore will be glad of any handle from our imprudence, either as to the matter or manner of it, to slight and disregard it.

Permit me to leave one caution more with you, and I have done; and that is, that ye would be more especially careful not to be rash with your mouths, when you happen to be engag'd in discoursing upon Subjects of more than ordinary, moment and importance; such as, for instance, the venerable Mysteries of our Religion, the Characters of our Governours, the Conduct of our Superiours, &c. These are nice and sacred Subjects, by no means rashly or irreverently to be treated: here we shall be in great danger, without our utmost care, of lashing out into things, which are too high for us: here our mistakes and misrepresentations will be of the most fatal and mischievous consequence, here our duty exacts from us, all the respect, tenderness and waryness, all the humility, modesty and charity, that we can possibly put on; and therefore here, if ever, ought we to lay our hands upon our mouths, and to consider, that God is an hearer of the tongue, and will not acquit a blasphemer of his words; *Wisd. 1. 6. 10. 11.* that the ear of jealousy heareth all things, and the noise of murmurings is not hid. Therefore beware of murmuring, which is unprofitable, and refrain your tongue from backbiting; for there is no word so secret, that shall go for nought: and the mouth that believeth, slayeth the Soul.

To conclude all; since the danger of talking much and rashly; is so evidently great, and the wisdom and advantage of a contrary practise so many ways apperent, let us be entreated to hearken to the advice of the wise Son of Sirach. *Learn before thou speakest. Weigh thy words in a balance, and make a door and bar for thy mouth; beware thou slide not by it. Let thy speech be short, comprehending much in few words, be as one that knoweth, and yet holdeth his Tongue.* Eccl. 18, 19. 32. 8.

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